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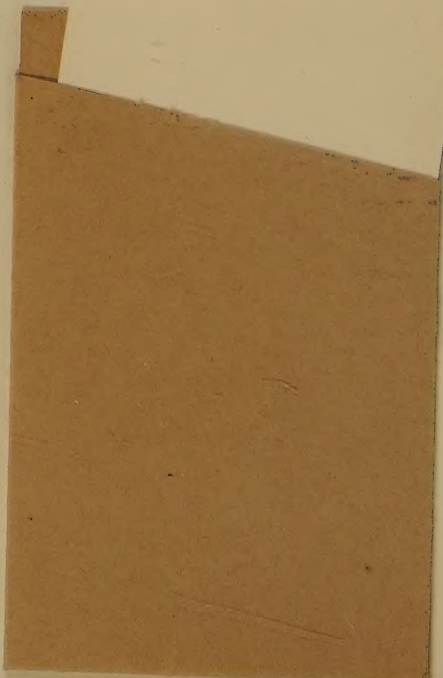

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ENGLISH STORIES,

ILLUSTRATING

SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING EVENTS AND CHARACTERS,

BETWEEN

THE ACCESSION OF ALFRED

AND

THE DEATH OF JOHN.

F 942 R
HA7

BY MARIA HACK.

R12746

If chance thy home
Salute thee with a father's honour'd name,
Go, call thy sons; instruct them what a debt
They owe their ancestors: bid them resolve
To pay it, by transmitting down entire
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.

AKENSIDE.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE reasons which have induced me to prefer the form of Stories, to a connected abridgment of any particular history, having been stated at some length on a former occasion*, it is unnecessary to repeat them here; yet, as the present attempt to pourtray historical events in a familiar manner, may come home to the feelings of many who care but little for the departed heroes of ancient Greece, it may not be unsuitable to explain with what views this work was undertaken.

The following Stories are intended for children of twelve or thirteen years old. At that age the mind is capable of reflection and comparison, and unless the taste has been vitiated by frivolous reading,

* See the Preface to Grecian Stories.

or the mental powers have become torpid from want of exercise, a desire for historical investigation may easily be excited; and that such inquiries, if wisely directed, are calculated, not only to strengthen the judgment, but to assist in the formation of a generous, noble, and virtuous character, will not, I believe, be denied.

But though adapted for children of the age above mentioned, it was not the intention of the writer that these Stories should be confined to such juvenile readers. Those who have finished their school education will find much in these pages which the abridgments used in the seminaries they have quitted, do not contain; and, without pretending to the dignity of a regular history, I hope these little narratives and conversations will convey a more distinct and faithful idea of the events and characters which they attempt to delineate, than has yet been offered to the notice of young persons. At least, I am not aware that the moral lessons, the

picturesque and animated descriptions, with which the voluminous works of our best historians abound, have been separated from the intricacies of political detail, and purified from allusions to the gross and licentious manners which prevailed among our ancestors. Their ignorance and rudeness are necessarily apparent, in tracing the progress of knowledge and refinement. The consequences of pride, ambition, revenge, and some other evil passions, are inevitably developed in our sketches of historical characters, and, when properly managed, they are useful materials in the hands of the moral painter. But what possible benefit can arise from perpetuating the disgusting pictures of sensual vice? The flimsy veil of affected modesty, which is thrown over them by the skilful hand of the historian, neither conceals their deformity, nor shields him from the just indignation of the anxious parent. Had the delicacy been *real*, such details would have been consigned to oblivion.

There is another class of readers whose approbation I am most anxious to obtain, and have spared no pains, in the hope that what was prepared for the entertainment of the child, might be thought worthy of fixing the attention of the mother.

Next to those lessons of primary importance which Christian parents feel it their duty to impart, and which the examples afforded by History are so eminently calculated to illustrate, perhaps no object more powerfully claims our attention, than to present the youthful mind with such a view of the story of our own country, as may at once strengthen the influence of moral and religious principle, and inspire a warm and enlightened attachment to the English Constitution. Would British parents avail themselves of their countless opportunities for exciting and cherishing such feelings, they would not only supply their children with a delightful exercise of the understanding, and with inexhaustible materials of thought and conversation; but, under

such impressions, the Spirit of Patriotism would take deep root in the warm soil of domestic affection, and shed its ennobling, animating influence on future generations.

Among these parents, I am aware there must be many whose opportunities and abilities for pursuing this subject in the domestic circle, are far greater than mine: should such honour these Stories with their attention, they may supply that which is deficient, and strengthen that which is weak. There may also be some whose leisure and advantages are more circumscribed, and these, I hope, will here find something to assist them in the important task of instruction. The good and the wise of both descriptions will, I trust, regard with indulgence the work which aims at such an object: I am fully conscious of the difficulty of the undertaking, but have been stimulated to the attempt by a deep sense of its usefulness. Surely, in a moment like the present, all who wish well to our country will teach their children to view the in-

stitutions of our ancestors with filial reverence, and to protect them from the rude hands, which, instead of repairing the dilapidations of time, or completing the tower or the battlement which ma have been left unfinished, are seeking t undermine the fabric, and to destroy not only the labour of past ages, but th tranquillity of the present, and the hopes of the future.

Chichester, 1819.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

Kingley Bottom, p. 2. Prospect from Bow Hill, p. 3. Anecdote of Archbishop Usher, p. 4. The Tumuli, p. 5. Story of the Sea Kings, p. 6. Their character and habits described, p. 7—10. Anecdote of Charlemagne, p. 11. Difference between his power of resistance and that of Alfred, p. 12. Destruction of Croyland, p. 13. Of the monastery of Peterborough, p. 18. Escape of the child of Croyland, p. 19.

ALFRED.

The birth of Alfred, p. 29. His journey to Rome, p. 30. He re-visits Rome, p. 31. Marriage of Ethelwolf, p. 32. Rebellion of Ethelbald, p. 33. Alfred learns to read, p. 34. Illuminated books, p. 35. Scarcity of books, p. 36. Alfred discovers the narrow limits of Saxon learning, p. 37. He is summoned to assist in the government, p. 40. He marries, and succeeds to the throne, *ibid.* He makes peace with the Danes, p. 41. Extent of Alfred's dominions, p. 42. Heptarchy explained, *ibid.* The Danes invade Wessex, p. 43. Why Alfred lost the affections of his people, p. 44. Prediction of St. Neot, p. 45. Alfred's ill-health, p. 46. Unhappy effects of parental partiality, p. 47. Why Alfred and his subjects despised each other, p. 48. Causes of his reformation, p. 49. Alfred escapes from court, p. 50. His residence [illegible] he swine-herd, *ibid.* Salutary effects of adversity, [illegible] The isle of Athelney, p. 54. Alfred's residence [illegible] His charity to the beggar, p. 56. Dis[illegible] [illegible] a harper, p. 58. He returns to Æth[illegible], and [illegible] his nobles to meet him at Brixton, p. 59. The Danes defeated at Eddington, p. 61. Alfred's clemency, p. 62. Conduct of Guthrum, p. 63. He settles in East Anglia, p. 64. Division of England after

this event, p. 65. First attempt of Hastings, p. 66. Alfred establishes a navy, p. 67. Second invasion of Hastings, p. 68. The Danes defeated at Farnham, p. 74. Exeter besieged, and Chichester attacked, p. 75. Expulsion of Hastings, p. 76. Connexion between war, famine, and pestilence, p. 77. The death of Alfred, p. 78. Review of the gradual formation of his character, p. 79. His first acquaintance with Asser, p. 81. Situation of Alfred's residence in Sussex, *ibid.* Asser's illness, p. 83. Alfred studies under his direction, p. 83. He learns to read Latin, p. 85. Method of learning Latin recommended by Locke, p. 86. The plan adopted by Queen Elizabeth, p. 87. Extract from one of Alfred's Letters, *ibid.* Books translated and composed by him, p. 89. Dr. Johnson's lines from Boetius, p. 90. Specimen of Alfred's poetry, p. 91. Slavery among the Anglo-Saxons, p. 93. The Ceorles, p. 95. *A hide of land*, p. 96. Of Thanes, p. 97. Conditions on which they held land, *ibid.* The king the chief judge, p. 98. Also general of the army, p. 99. The Wittena-gemote, p. 100. The Book of Winchester, and division of the kingdom, p. 101. The county court, 103. Alfred's piety and humility, p. 104. Speed's map of Sussex, p. 105. Population of England in the time of Alfred, p. 107. Wilfrid teaches the people of Sussex the art of fishing, p. 108. Alfred's division of time, and his subsitute for clocks, p. 110. His horn-lantern, p. 112. Character of Alfred as a father, *ibid.* His children, p. 113. His last instructions to his son, p. 114. His characteristic title, p. 115.

HAROLD.

The Anglo-Saxons relapse into barbarism, p. 116. Labours of Alfred not lost, p. 117. Alfred and Lycurgus compared, 118. Danish mercenaries, p. 119. Ethelred orders them to be massacred, p. 120. Canute the Dane, p. 121. His character, p. 122. The Saxon princes protected in Hungary, p. 123. Pilgrimages of the Saxons, p. 124. Relics, p. 126. Riches of the Clergy, p. 127. Why the English were so easily conquered, p. 128. Prince Edward returns from Hungary, p. 129. Atheling explained, *ibid.* Harold elected king, p. 130. He suppresses a rebellion in Northumbria, *ibid.* Elective monarchy, and Sobieski, p. 131. Harold shipwrecked, p. 132. His oath to William of Normandy, p. 133. Character of Harold, p. 134. Remarks on the Norman conquest, p. 135. Discontent of Tosti, and Norwegian invasion, p. 136. Battle of Stamford Bridge, p. 137. Landing of the duke of Normandy, p. 138. Conduct of

Harold, p. 139. Harold and William compared, p. 141. Harold met by a monk, p. 142. Remarks on the overthrow of the Saxon government, p. 143. THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS, p. 145.

CONVERSATION ON FEUDAL GOVERNMENT.

Allodial property explained, p. 154. Change made by Canute, p. 155. Explanation of the word *feudal*, ibid. Change from allodial to feudal tenures, p. 156. A feudal court described, p. 157. Subdvisions of feudal property, p. 158. Distinction between allodial and feudal governments, p. 159.

HENRY PLANTAGENET.

Rejoicings on account of the birth of Henry, p. 162. Ingratitude of Stephen, p. 163. His usurpation, p. 164. Family surnames, p. 165. Miseries of civil war, p. 167. Haughtiness of Matilda, p. 168. She is besieged at Oxford, p. 169. Her escape, p. 171. Henry's residence at Bristol, p. 172. Character of the earl of Gloucester, p. 173. His death, p. 174. Matilda returns to Normandy, p. 175. Henry receives the honour of knighthood, p. 176. King David's attachment to English manners, p. 177. Account of the education of a knight, p. 178. Chivalry useful in a barbarous age, p. 180. Private war, p. 182. Good effects of feudal institutions, p. 183. Influence of the clergy, p. 185. Ceremonies used in conferring the order of knighthood, p. 186. Henry returns to Normandy, p. 188. His possessions in France, p. 189. The death of Stephen, p. 190. Henry's coronation, p. 191. Arundel castle, p. 192. Henry's contest with Roger de Mortimer, p. 193. Loyalty of Hubert de St. Clare, p. 194. Character of Henry's government, p. 195—200.

THOMAS BECKET.

Henry's judicious choice of ministers, p. 201. Richard de Lucy, p. 202. Becket the first Englishman who rises to a high station, p. 204. His education, character, and advancement to the office of chancellor, *ibid.* to 207. Anecdote of Henry, Becket, and the beggar, *ibid.* Becket's powers of pleasing, p. 208. Death of Theobald, p. 210. Henry resolves to restrain the excesses of the clergy, p. 211. Separation between courts of law and ecclesiastical courts, p. 212. Power claimed by the Pope, *ibid.* Henry determines to make Becket archbishop of

Canterbury, p. 213. Change in the character of Becket, p. 215. Henry's displeasure, p. 217. Becket attends the council of Tours, p. 218. He returns to England and opposes the views of the king, *ibid.* Henry summons the bishops to meet him at Westminster, p. 220. Artful conduct of Becket, p. 221. The young prince removed from his care, p. 222. Henry's errors respecting papal power, p. 225. And ecclesiastical power, p. 226. First instance in English history of death inflicted on account of religious opinions, p. 227. Character of Henry, p. 228. The nobles alarmed by the claims of Becket, 229. A parliament summoned to meet at Clarendon, p. 231. Becket's deceitful conduct, p. 232. He pretends to repent of his oath, p. 235. Papal Bulls, p. 236. Becket's attempt to leave England, p. 237. He is accused by the king, in a parliament held at Northampton, p. 239. Becket's escape, p. 240—246. The king of France and the pope receive him favourably, p. 248. He produces the Constitutions of Clarendon, p. 249. The death of Matilda, her character, p. 250—253. Henry and Becket meet at Montmirail, *ibid.* They are formally reconciled, p. 255. Becket returns to England, p. 256. His first measures, p. 257. Excommunication, p. 259. Some English prelates appeal to the king, p. 260. His behaviour on that occasion, *ibid.* Four knights leave the court in pursuit of Becket, p. 261. Their arrival at Canterbury, interview with the archbishop, and his death, *ibid.* to 266. Remarks on his character, p. 267. Retreat of the murderers, p. 269. Grief and consternation of Henry, p. 270. The ingratitude of his children, p. 271. The death of Henry, p. 272. His lot compared with that of Matilda, p. 273.

THE SARACENS.

Pilgrimages to Jerusalem, p. 274. Ingulphus and Sir Sidney Smith, p. 275. Motives of pilgrimage, p. 277. Present character of the Turks, 279. Of the Arabs in the 6th century, 280. Appearance of Mohammed, *ibid.* His pretensions, the Koran, p. 281. Causes of his success, p. 282. Incredulity of his countrymen, p. 283. Progress of the Saracens, p. 284. Decline of their power, 285. Advantages resulting from their dominion, p. 286. Caliphs Almanzor, Haroun al Rashid, and Almamon, p. 288. Introduction of the Arabian sciences into Spain, p. 289. Gerbert, arithmetic, p. 290—293. Aldhelm, *ibid.* Athelard of Bath, 295. Michael Scott, *ibid.* Superiority of the Arabian to the Greek philosophers, p. 296. The fall of the Saracen empire not to be regretted, p. 297.

Rise of the Turkish power, 298. Peter the Hermit, p. 299. Council of Placentia, p. 301. Council of Clermont, p. 302. Different colours of the crosses worn in the Crusades, p. 303. The Scrip and Staff, *ibid.* Palm-branches, p. 304. European sovereigns who joined the third Crusade, *ibid.* Kingdom of Jerusalem, p. 305. Character of Saladin, p. 306. His designs against Europe, p. 309.

RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

Richard visits the dead body of his father, p. 310. His conduct on his accession, p. 311. His character, *ibid.* to 314. Saladin takes Jerusalem, *ibid.* Richard resolves to join the Crusade, p. 315. His preparations, p. 316. His journey and voyage to Palestine, p. 317—321. View of Acre, &c. *ibid.* Richard's exertions during the siege, p. 322. The ballista described, p. 323. The king of France returns to Europe, p. 324. Massacre of the Turkish hostages, p. 325. Credit due to Bohadin, p. 326. March from Acre to Ascalon, p. 327. Battle of Jaffa, p. 330. Richard advances towards Jerusalem, p. 332. Consternation of the inhabitants, p. 333. Saladin attacks Jaffa, Richard's chivalrous adventure there, p. 334. He proposes a truce, p. 335; and returns to Europe, p. 336. "Stories for Children," their carelessness with respect to historical truth, *ibid.* Richard taken prisoner on his return, p. 338. He defends his conduct before the *Diet*, p. 339. Account of the Old Man of the Mountain, and the Assassins, p. 341—345. Richard released from captivity, p. 345. His death, p. 346. Remarks on his character and conduct, p. 347. Comparison between Richard and Charles the Twelfth, p. 348.

KING JOHN.

The fate of prince Arthur, p. 349. John loses Normandy, p. 351. The contest between him and the pope, p. 353. Innocent the Third, p. 354. Stephen Langton chosen archbishop of Canterbury, p. 355. Conduct of John on receiving intelligence of it, *ibid.* Innocent lays the kingdom under an Interdict, that term explained, p. 357. Innocent excommunicates and deposes John, p. 359. Mission of Pandolfo, p. 360. John swears fealty to the pope, p. 361. His interview with Langton, p. 363. Loyalty, 364. The barons claim a renewal of their ancient rights, p. 365. They obtain the grant of MAGNA CHARTA, p. 366. Repentance and death of king John, p. 367.

MAGNA CHARTA.

Return to the institutions of Alfred, p. 369. *Danc-Lage, West Saxon-Lage, Mercen-Lage*, p. 371. Common Law, p. 372. Trial by ordeal, p. 373. Practised by the ancient Greeks, p. 375. By the Indians of Malabar, p. 376. Trial by jury, *ibid.* Compurgation, p. 377. Prevalence of perjury, p. 378. Petrarch and Cardinal Colonna, p. 379. Alterations introduced by William the Conqueror, p. 380. Forest-laws, Game-laws, p. 381. Grand justiciary, p. 382. Trial by combat, 383. Sale of public justice, military tenure, various classes of subjects, p. 385. William Rufus, Henry the First, abolition of the Curfeu, p. 386. Henry Plantagenet, Constitutions of Clarendon, p. 387. The grand assize, p. 388. Origin of subsidies and land-tax, *ibid.* Cœur de Lion repeals the severest penalties decreed by the forest-laws, *ibid.* Tyranny of John, p. 389. Langton finds the charter of Henry the First, p. 390. Character of Langton, p. 391. The barons meet the king at Runny-mead, p. 393. Extracts from MAGNA CHARTA, p. 394. Benefits secured by the charter, p. 395. William earl of Pembroke, p. 396. Conduct of the pope and the king, p. 397. Prince Henry succeeds his father, p. 398. Conclusion, *ibid.* &c.

ENGLISH STORIES.

INTRODUCTION.

Now, borne upon the wings of truth sublime,
Review thy dim original and prime.
This island, spot of unreclaim'd rude earth,
The cradle that receiv'd thee at thy birth,
Was rock'd by many a rough Norwegian blast,
And Danish howlings scar'd thee as they pass'd.

COWPER.

IN the western part of Sussex, the ridge of chalk hills called the South Downs affords the most beautiful variety of scenery. Many elevations not much inferior in height to the principal chain, branch out from it; others appear detached from the main line, or divided by valleys much above the level of the sea. Some of these declivities are naked, others in part cultivated, or covered with wood; but the whole presenting a singular combination of richness, boldness, and

picturesque beauty. Embosomed in these hills is a wild and solitary valley, well known to the inhabitants of that district by the name of Kingly Bottom. Harry and Lucy had often heard the beauty of this place mentioned, and they were greatly delighted when their mother called them to accompany her in a ride, to the spot which they had so long wished to see. They left the chaise in the valley, and walked slowly up the steep side of the hill which encloses it. The ascent soon became difficult, and Mrs. B. sat down to rest. "My dear mamma," said Harry, "if you are tired already, I am afraid you will never be able to get up this hill: it is a great deal steeper above us." "I must rest here a little longer, and recover my breath, and then I will take the advice of Imlac. You know he told Rasselas that 'human reason borrowed many arts from the instinct of animals.'" "Yes, mamma, and he and the prince escaped from the happy valley by imitating the conies, but I cannot imagine how we are to do that!" Mrs. B. picked a lock of wool off a juniper-bush which grew beside her, and said: "The harmless animal that has been here before us, may direct our efforts as successfully as the conies did those of Rasselas and his friend." She then rose, and leaning one hand on Harry's shoulder, who was very proud of his superior dexterity in climbing,

and of being, as he said, *of real use* to his mother, they proceeded slowly along the side of the hill, in the narrow, imperfect track left by the sheep, which are accustomed to feed on those steep declivities. By degrees they rose higher and higher, and the wide prospect opened before them.

The richly-cultivated plain at their feet was bounded by the sea; and the long level line of the horizon formed a pleasing contrast to the bold shores of the Isle of Wight, which rose abruptly from the waves, and to the deep indentings of the creeks and harbours on the Sussex coast, which glittered between the dark trees that surrounded them. "Oh, what a beautiful prospect!" exclaimed Lucy: "can you show us which of those inlets is Chichester harbour, mamma?"

"It is a little to the right, and a ship is just coming in. The sun shines so brightly on the sails, that you cannot help seeing it."

"I see it," cried Harry, "as plainly as possible! But look still more to the right: there are a great many ships. And how much we can see of the Isle of Wight! I never thought it reached so far towards the west."

"Those ships are lying at anchor at Spithead," replied his mother; "but come, let us

pursue our walk round the top of the hill. Bow Hill it is justly called, for it bends like a crescent round the beautiful valley it encloses. I am glad to turn," added she, "for the greenness of the downs refreshes our eyes, after the dazzling reflection of light from the water."

"How different are our feelings," continued Mrs. B. as the little party sauntered along, "from those with which our ancestors visited this spot! To them it must have been dear and glorious, as the Straits of Salamis to the Athenians."

"If it was glorious to them, it must be so to us, since they were our countrymen. Will you be so kind as to tell us what happened here, mamma? If it was any thing very remarkable, it would be a shame for *us* not to know it, who live in sight of this hill!"

"You remind me of an anecdote I have read of Archbishop Usher. When he was about fourteen years old, he happened to read this sentence: 'To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born, is to be always a child.' And it made so strong an impression upon his mind, that history, from that time, became his favourite pursuit*."

"I do not wonder at that, for it is very en-

*See Aikin's Life of Usher.

tertaining to know what *has* happened. I like to read about Leonidas, and Themistocles, and Xenophon; but to know what has been done in our own country, must be far more interesting to an English boy. You compared this hill to the Straits of Salamis, mamma; has a battle been fought here?"

"Yes, my love. This spot, now so quiet and solitary, was once the scene of a dreadful slaughter. Look before you, and you will see the monuments of the victory gained by our fellow-citizens."

While Mrs. B. was speaking, they arrived at the base of the largest of those tumuli, which still mark the scene of that terrible conflict. They climbed to the top, and sat down upon the turf. Again the rich and varied prospect expanded before them, like the magic circle of a panorama; but the creeks and the harbours now glittered in vain, and even Chichester cathedral lifted its beautiful spire unnoticed.

The thoughts of Harry and Lucy were fixed on the times that were past: they expressed an earnest wish to know the circumstances to which their mother had alluded, and, with her usual willingness to gratify rational curiosity, she told them the following story of the Sea-kings.

THE SEA-KINGS.

Since you desire to know something of those fierce and terrible barbarians, whose bones have long since crumbled into dust beneath these hillocks, your thoughts must travel back rather more than 900 years, to the time when Alfred the Great reigned in England. You have heard of Alfred, Harry.

HARRY.

What! the Alfred who forgot the old woman's cakes, and let them burn! Yes; I remember him very well, in "Evenings at Home." But what had he to do with these hillocks?

MRS. B.

It was in the reign of Alfred that some pirates, celebrated in the history of those times by the dreaded name of Sea-kings, landed on this part of the coast, and attacked Chichester. The brave citizens repulsed them with dreadful slaughter, and pursued the fugitives to the sea, or perhaps to the harbour before you, where they took some of their ships*.

This spot is supposed to have been the field of battle, and these tumuli are believed to be sepulchral monuments, raised over the bodies of the piratical chiefs, or Sea-kings, who fell in that

* Turner's Hist. Anglo Sax. vol. ii. p. 230.

engagement*. The beautiful valley beneath us derives its name from this circumstance, and these hillocks are called among the common people, "*The Kings' tombs.*"

LUCY.

If I had heard *that*, I should have supposed some old story belonged to this place; but there is nothing very remarkable in the sound of Kingly Bottom.

MRS. B.

That is because you do not know that *ly* is a corruption of the Saxon word *lic*, which means corpse, or dead body†.

HARRY.

But who were these kings? *Sea-kings*, you called them, mamma. What do you mean by that?

MRS. B.

Though the term appears strange to you, Harry, it is strictly just; for the Sea-kings did not possess any territory whatever. Issuing from the shores of the Baltic, they filled every neighbouring coast with blood and misery. They were a race of beings whom Europe beheld with horror. Without country, without towns, they had no possessions but their ships, no subjects but their crews, no hope but their swords.

* Dallaway's Western Sussex, Parochial Topog. p. 111. † *Ib.*

They swarmed upon the boisterous ocean, where they maintained a fearful empire, and visited, like fiends of vengeance, every district which they could approach. Never to sleep under a smoky roof, never to drink their wine round a hearth, were the boasts of these watery sovereigns*.

LUCY.

What a strange, dreadful life! I wonder all the kings of the earth did not unite against those terrible kings of the sea.

MRS. B.

That would have been fighting against their own relations. It was customary among the barbarous nations who inhabited the shores of the Baltic, for one of the male children of each petty sovereign, to remain at home and inherit the royal dignity. From the age of twelve, the others were in action under piratical tutors; and when their brother ascended the paternal throne, they hastened, like so many Neptunes, to establish their dominion among the restless waves; having received their ships, and what was necessary to equip them, as an inheritance from their father. These pirates of royal descent enjoyed the title of kings, though they possessed no territory. They were of themselves surpris-

*Turner, *ib.* p. 38, &c.

ingly numerous; and were, properly speaking, the *Sea-kings*, but they only formed a part of those lawless plunderers, who in the ninth century infested the ocean. Piracy was then considered the most honourable occupation, and the most abundant harvest of wealth. Among the sovereigns of the north it was the general amusement of the summer months. Their subjects endeavoured to imitate the actions they admired; and every man of consequence and property fitted out ships, and roamed the seas in quest of plunder. In this strange state of society, no one was esteemed noble, or even respected by his countrymen, who did not return in the winter to his home, with his ships laden with booty. The spoils consisted of every necessary of life: clothes, domestic utensils, cattle, which the pirates killed and prepared on the shores they ravaged; and even the miserable inhabitants, many of whom were carried off as slaves.

These cruel pirates often suffered from destroyers like themselves, the same kind of miseries which they had been inflicting on others; and when the successful plunderer returned with his prey, he found only the ashes of his habitation, and the lifeless remains of his family*.

* Turner, p. 40—46.

LUCY.

I should think a few instances of that kind, would teach them the folly and cruelty of a piratical life.

MRS. B.

It does not appear to have had that effect. Their hearts were so hardened by long habits of violence and cruelty, that they had no tears to shed for the fate of their nearest connexions. But though insensible of the gentler emotions of sorrow, they were capable of the wildest excesses of revenge. This might naturally be expected from men of such a character; but we are assured, that it was their practice to tear the helpless infant from the arms of its mother, and toss it on their lances from one ruffian to another. Cruelty like this, for which no apparent motive can be assigned, seems incredible: but history describes these pirates, as taking a strange pleasure in the sight of human misery*.

LUCY.

I am sure it must have been very dreadful to live near the coast, when they were roaming about in search of plunder. Look at those vessels yonder in the harbour. Oh, what terror we should feel, if we thought they belonged to a party of Sea-kings!

* Turner, p. 47—51.

MRS. B.

I have read an account of the impression which such a sight produced on the mind of Charlemagne. That great prince was at dinner in the city of Narbonne, when some ships of the Sea-kings came in sight. By the construction of the vessels and the agility of the sailors, he knew they were not merchants. He rose from table, and went to an eastern window to observe them. While he gazed on these terrible destroyers, tears flowed down his venerable face. "I fear not," said he, "that they can injure me; but I weep that they should dare, in my life-time, to approach my coasts. I anticipate the miseries they will bring on my posterity*."

HARRY.

Did the pirates land, and attack Charlemagne?

MRS. B.

I believe not, for they knew that he was well prepared. In every harbour, and at the mouth of every river which it was possible for these ravagers to ascend, he established garrisons for the defence of the country. The Sea-kings stood in awe of these precautions, and seldom molested the dominions of Charlemagne†.

LUCY.

If Alfred had been equally prudent, I suppose

* Turner, p. 70, &c. † *Ib.* p. 71.

these tumuli would not have been here, and you would not have told us this story.

MRS. B.

That is an unfair comparison, my dear girl, because Alfred and Charlemagne were very differently circumstanced. The miseries inflicted by the Sea-kings were for a long time confined to the shores of the Baltic; and when they first sailed round the peninsula of Jutland, to extend their ravages to other coasts, Charlemagne was a powerful monarch, possessing ample means of defence. This happened in the middle of the eighth century, about one hundred years before the birth of Alfred. At that time England was divided into small independent kingdoms, which were prevented by mutual jealousy, from uniting in a vigorous plan of defence against the common enemy.

LUCY.

I understand it now. Alfred was born when the country was subject to the ravages of the Sea-kings, and Charlemagne was able to defend himself against their first attacks. Go on, dear mamma.

MRS. B.

It is said that these pirates first appeared on our coasts in the year 787, more than a hundred years before they made that attack on Chichester, which gave rise to this conversation. I think

you would feel more pain than pleasure, if I were to tell you half the miseries endured by our countrymen, while they were subject to these dreadful visitations. But if you like it, I will relate some particulars respecting the fate of the monks of Croyland, which I think will interest you.

HARRY.

Thank you, dear mamma. But before you begin, will you tell us where the monastery of Croyland was situated?

MRS. B.

You know that arm of the sea called the Wash, which separates the counties of Lincoln and Norfolk. Croyland was in a fenny island, formed on one side by the Wash, on the other by two of the rivers which there discharge their waters into the German Sea. A few years before the accession of Alfred, Ragnar Lodbrog, one of the most famous of the Sea-kings, was shipwrecked on the coast of Northumberland. The king of that district took him prisoner, and put him to a cruel death. This unjust action was the source of dreadful calamities to England. When the sons of Ragnar heard how he had perished, they shed no tears, they uttered no complaints, but they bent all the powers of their minds to accomplish a great and terrible revenge. They no longer engaged in the piratical expedi-

tions and transient hostilities which usually occupied the attention of Sea-kings: all former habits and present projects seemed to be forgotten. Ragnar Lodbrog had been greatly celebrated among the savages of the Baltic; and when his sons proclaimed his fate, and their resolution to avenge it, numerous bands of warriors joined them, all animated, like themselves, with deadly hatred against the king who had destroyed their favourite hero. When this army was collected, it quitted the Baltic, and arrived safely on the English coast*.

The Danish chieftains did not rush at once upon their prey: they landed on the coast of East Anglia, which comprehended the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, and passed the winter quietly in their camp. The following spring they marched into Yorkshire, and extended their ravages to the Tyne. The sons of Ragnar inflicted the most cruel torments on the murderer of their father; and one of the Danish chiefs, named Ivar, usurped the kingdom of Northumberland, and ruled all the country between the Humber and the Tyne†.

It was soon evident that the invaders had no intention of departing, but had resolved to change the vessels of a Sea-king for the posses-

* Turner, p. 115—118. † *Ib.* p. 120—124.

sion of a kingdom. They separated into different bands, and committed hostilities in various quarters; but the fourth year of their residence in England was distinguished by a series of the most cruel ravages. In the spring they embarked on the Humber, and landed in the northern part of Lincolnshire. You are familiar with the three divisions of that county in Dr. Aikin's outline map, and can therefore follow the steps of these destroyers in your imagination, though we have no map here to assist us. The towns, villages, churches, monasteries, libraries, and harvests of Lindesey, were pillaged and burned; and after employing the summer in this work of desolation, the Danes, about Michaelmas, passed the river Witham, entered the district of Kesteven, and, in like manner, laid waste the country with fire and sword. The brave earl Algar drew out the youth of Holland, the smallest and most southern division of Lincolnshire. Like the Batavian Holland, that tract of country was so moist and boggy, that the ground shook when stamped upon, and the print of the feet remained on it. The lower part of the province consisted of impassable marshes, defended by huge banks from the encroachments of the sea. Amidst these bogs and fens, earl Algar, like the Grecian Leonidas, made a noble stand for the liberty of his coun-

try. Like him, Algar was overpowered by numbers; he retreated with a few brave friends to an eminence, where, like the Spartans and Thespians, they fought till the last man was slain. During the confusion, some youths threw their arms into a neighbouring wood, and in the following night effected their escape to Croyland, where they arrived while the abbot and his monks were engaged in their devotional exercises. The dismal tale they had to tell struck terror into every heart, and inspired a gloomy foreboding of approaching calamity. The abbot sent away the strong and youthful members of his little community, to hide themselves in the neighbouring marshes, with the relics, jewels, and charters belonging to the monastery, till the expected storm should have passed by. The aged monks and a few children remained at Croyland with the superior*.

LUCY.

How came there to be any children in the monastery, mamma?

MRS. B.

At that time schools were kept in monasteries, where children, especially such as were intended for priests, received their education†.

* Turner, p. 129—137. † Henry, vol. ii. p. 352.

HARRY.

Pray go on, mamma. I want to know what became of the poor old monks and the little children.

MRS. B.

Indeed they were in a fearful situation. The flames of the villages in Kesteven now came gradually nearer and nearer, and the clamours of the fierce pagans were already heard. About thirty of the monks embarked in a boat, and reached the neighbouring island of Thorney, which William of Malmsbury, one of our ancient historians, describes as a little paradise in the midst of the waters. Though surrounded by marshes, that beautiful island was highly cultivated. Here were fruitful orchards; there, vines crept along the ground, or twined round poles. In another part was a smooth, green lawn, shaded with trees. A monastery was situated in this delightful solitude, and here the fugitives from Croyland remained for four days.

In the meantime the storm was approaching the walls which they had deserted, and the abbot, with his companions, who were too young or too old to fly, put on their sacred vestments, and assembled in the choir, with a faint hope, that unresisting age, and helpless childhood, might be spared, even by the ferocious Danes. That hope soon failed them! A crowd of howl-

ing barbarians rushed into the church, exulting that they had found Christian priests to massacre. The venerable abbot was hewn down at the altar, and the attendant priests were beheaded. The old men and children, who ran affrighted from the choir, were seized and tortured, to make them discover the treasures of the place. Every part of the building was stained with blood. In the midst of this dreadful carnage, Sidroc, one of the Danish chiefs, was struck with the beautiful countenance of a child of ten years old. His hard heart relented; and this poor boy alone, of all the inhabitants of Croyland, was permitted to live. The spoilers broke down all the tombs and monuments, in hopes of discovering treasures, and on the third day they set fire to the monastery.

They had now done what mischief they could, and collecting an immense number of cattle, which they had seized in the neighbourhood, they marched the next day to Peterborough. There stood another monastery, like Croyland, the boast of that age for its architecture, and possessing a library, collected by the anxious labours of two hundred years. The barbarians had no more respect for learning, than for the elegant arts. They attacked the gates and walls with their archers and machines. At the second assault they burst in, and began the work of

slaughter. Every one of the inhabitants was massacred; and the only trait of humanity recorded on that dreadful day, was shown by Sidroc. He cautioned the little boy whom he had saved from Croyland, to keep out of the way of Hubba, the Danish commander, who was most active in the work of death. Peterborough shared the fate of Croyland. The beautiful edifice, and the valuable library it contained, were soon wrapped in flames, which continued burning for fifteen days.

The Danes now quitted the monastery, with all the booty which they had amassed, and directed their course southward, towards Huntingdon. Sidroc was one of those appointed to guard the rear, and transport the baggage across the rivers. As they were passing the Nen, two cars laden with vast wealth were overturned, and, with all the cattle which were drawing them, precipitated into a whirlpool of unknown depth. While the attendants of Sidroc were thrown into confusion by this accident, the child of Croyland made his escape into the nearest wood*.

HARRY.

Oh, poor little fellow! what will become of him? Go on, mamma. I like this story very much!

* Turner, p. 137—141.

MRS. B.

He walked all night, and happily in the right direction; for, by the first rays of the rising sun, he saw at a distance the smoking ruins of his monastery. When he arrived there, he found that the monks had returned from Thorney on the preceding day, and were busily employed in extinguishing the flames, which still raged in different parts of the building. The little, tired boy related the horrors of the scenes he had witnessed; and the monks, oppressed with grief for the fate of their abbot and elder brethren, were for some time incapable of continuing their exertions. Their first task was to collect as many as they could find of the mutilated and half-consumed bodies of their friends, which they buried as decently as their circumstances permitted. Having performed this last office of respect to the departed, they repaired part of the ruins, and chose another abbot. They now received a visit from their late benefactors, the hermits of Thorney, who appear to have left their beautiful solitude from motives of Christian charity. They came to Croyland to request assistance from the monks in performing funeral rites in the monastery of Peterborough, where there were none living to bury the dead, and the beasts of prey were already devouring their unprotected remains. A deputation of monks

left Croyland on this mournful errand. At Peterborough they found eighty-four dead bodies, and consigned them all to one large grave, laying the corpse of the abbot at the top of the pile. A pyramid of stone was then raised over these victims of pagan fury, which was afterwards adorned with sculpture, in memory of their unhappy fate*.

LUCY.

I never heard a more melancholy story. But you have not told us what became of that poor little boy.

MRS. B.

I know nothing of his history after he regained his home, therefore I cannot tell it to you.

HARRY.

Mamma, I think these Danish pirates were the most cruel and wicked people that ever lived. I could not have supposed it was possible for men to be so barbarous.

MRS. B.

Indeed it is shocking to reflect, that of all the calamities to which this life is subject, the most

* Turner, p. 141.

dreadful are those which men suffer from the furious passions of their fellow-men. The pages of history afford many illustrations of this truth. When you are better acquainted with them, you will see how little the progress of civilization, of knowledge, and of Christianity, have yet accomplished towards allaying the spirit of ambition, or subduing the love of military glory. The peasants of Russia and Germany can, even now, tell tales as dreadful as those recorded by the historian of Croyland; and could you hear them, you would cease to wonder at the excesses committed by the untaught pagans of the Baltic.

LUCY.

I am afraid, mamma, that you do not think the world is much improved.

MRS. B.

The view of that beautiful and fertile plain before us, might reproach me if I said so, Lucy; for it was once a dreary wilderness, incapable of supporting its famishing inhabitants. Oh, no! the world is very much improved; and it seems to us as if we had no feelings in common with those dreadful men whose ravages I have been describing. Their character was formed by habits of piracy, which rendered them, from childhood, familiar with scenes of blood and cruelty. But we shall deceive ourselves, if we suppose that even polished and civilized

nations can indulge the love of military glory, without at the same time declining in humanity and virtue. However it may disguise itself, the spirit of war is the spirit of tyrannical selfishness, and the greatest enemy to the improvement and happiness of man.

LUCY.

I believe that is very true, for it makes one nation rejoice in the distresses of another; and then it must be owned that they bear some resemblance to the Sea-kings. I wish they would find a better way of settling their differences!

MRS. B.

You cannot wish a greater benefit to the world, my dear child; and remember, that every person who cultivates the spirit of justice and benevolence, does something towards bringing society into that state which will render war unnecessary.

Let us now return into the valley. I wish you to examine the yew-trees in that grove: it is not likely you will ever see their equals in size and beauty.

Saying this she arose, and, with Harry's help, descended the steep side of the tumulus. The children still lingered at its base. "The battle seems to have been fought on the very highest part of the hill, mamma," said Harry.

"That does not necessarily follow," replied his mother: "I should rather suppose that the citizens of Chichester selected this spot for the erection of the tumuli, that they might enjoy the pleasure of seeing, from their own walls, these monuments of their victory."

"I will look for them when we go home: I shall always like to see them! And, mamma, I find you are very right in saying, that our pleasures increase with our knowledge. When we came here this morning, I saw nothing in these tumuli but heaps of earth; and *now*—Oh, how many thoughts they bring to my mind!"

ALFRED.

All-pitying Heaven,
Severe in mercy, chast'ning in its love,
Ofttimes in dark and awful visitation,
Doth interpose, and leads the wand'rer back
To the straight path, to be for ever after
A firm, undaunted, onward-bearing traveller,
Strong in humility, who swerves no more.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE visit to the tumuli produced the effect which Mrs. B. had anticipated. Lucy and Harry, because they knew a little, felt an earnest desire to know more. They examined the Atlas, and found the little island in which Croyland (or Crowland, as it is called in modern maps) is situated, and they read the account of Lincolnshire, in "England Delineated." When Mrs. B. saw their attention thus engaged, and that they were endeavouring to increase their knowledge by their own efforts, she offered her assistance. "Have you found all you wish, my dears?" said she, "or can I be of any use to you?"

LUCY.

Yes, that you can, dear mamma, of the greatest use; for you can tell us how to go on. We thought we should have found something more about Croyland here, and whether the monks built it again; but we are disappointed. The ruins of the monastery are slightly mentioned, and that is all.

HARRY.

And still more than that, I wish to know a great deal about Alfred and the Danes, and this is not the right book for that sort of knowledge. You know, mamma, if I am "ignorant of what occurred before I was born, I must be always a child," and neither you nor I shall like that.

MRS. B.

I have a few Stories taken from English History, up stairs in my desk, and the first of them relates to Alfred. If you think you should like to read it, I will go and fetch it down.

HARRY.

Oh, thank you, dearest mother! You are very kind, to help us just when we wanted help!

"You deserved it, by first trying to help yourselves," said Mrs. B. as she left the room. She soon returned, with a thick manuscript volume, which she laid on the table. Harry

eagerly opened it, and began turning over the leaves. Lucy said, she was particularly glad that Alfred was the hero of the first story; because, as he began to reign soon after the destruction of Croyland, she thought that Harry's wish would be gratified. "And *I* too," added she, "shall be glad to hear how Alfred managed. I am sure he must have had far greater difficulties to contend with, than I had any notion of, before you told us the story of those terrible Sea-kings.

HARRY.

Oh, depend upon it, as soon as Alfred was king he set every thing to rights. He was the man to keep people in order. I have heard somebody say that he hung up gold bracelets by the road-side, and nobody dared to touch them. I wish we had lived in his days!

MRS. B.

I did not know that you had heard that bracelet-story, Harry; but even supposing it to be true, it would be no proof that England was a desirable residence in the days of Alfred. He was certainly a wonderful man, and I think the story you are going to read about him, will amuse you very much; but you have reason to be thankful that you are born in happier times.

LUCY.

I am glad you are of that opinion, mamma, for I like to believe that the world is growing better. But when Harry is very much interested about the glory of a favourite hero, he forgets the unhappiness of the multitude of his countrymen who were *not* heroes. Only think now, if we had been living at Chichester when those terrible Sea-kings landed, all our friends might have been killed in the battle, and what would have become of us? It would have been no comfort to know that we had a hero for our king.

MRS. B.

Very true, my dear. It is for want of making this reflection, that we are so dazzled by the splendour of military glory, as to forget how wretched must be the state of that country, in which any man can have an opportunity of acquiring it.

HARRY.

I am very sorry to hear all this, for I like to read about heroes. I am afraid you do not like Alfred, mamma.

MRS. B.

I admire the character of Alfred far more than you do, my dear Harry. For you think of him only as a brave prince, who endeavoured to protect his subjects from a horde of merciless

enemies. Any courageous man might have done that; but Alfred possessed qualities far more heroic than those of a victorious general: for I dispute that man's claim to the title of a *true hero*, of whom nothing better can be said, than that he was the principal actor in a great and bloody tragedy. Alfred had far higher claims to our admiration: you may begin to read now, and we will consider them.

Harry then began to read the story of

ALFRED.

The youngest son of Ethelwolf, king of the West Saxons, was born at a place called Wannating, (supposed to be the same which now bears the name of Wantage,) in Berkshire, in the year 849*. Alfred, for that was his name, was probably distinguished from other infants only by that beauty of countenance and person, for which he was remarkable through life†. This, perhaps, might have some effect in rendering him the darling of a weak and partial father. But how did he acquire that energy, that persevering activity, which rendered his birth an epoch in the history of man? Every event in the life of a child, every thing that passes around him, be-

*Aikin's Biog. Dict. *art.* Alfred. †Hume, vol. i. p. 91.

comes part of his education. We will trace the progress of Alfred from his earliest years, and observe the influence of circumstances on his conduct and character.

The partiality of Ethelwolf seems to have increased with the growth of his little favourite, who had only completed his fourth year, when his father formed a strange scheme of making him his successor, to the exclusion of his elder brothers, though two of them were almost grown up. In order to carry this plan into effect, Ethelwolf resolved to avail himself of the authority and sanction of the pope; and in the year 853 he sent Alfred to Rome, with a great train of nobility and others. The pope anointed him king, at the request of his father. Injustice always excites discontent; and perhaps no kind of injustice is felt to be more blameable, than that by which a parent endeavours to exalt one child at the expence of another.

A journey to Rome was a great event, but Alfred was then too young to make many observations, or to remember much of what he saw. He was, however, old enough to feel the value of kindness, and to retain a grateful sense of it. In his journey through France he received many attentions from a priest, or monk, named Grimbald. Afterwards, when Alfred was a powerful king, he sent for Grimbald to his court, and

treated him with distinguished honour and steady kindness*.

LUCY.

Then gratitude was the first of Alfred's virtues; and he must have felt it very strongly, to retain it for so many years: or did he see Grimbald again?

MRS. B.

It is not improbable that he might have seen him two or three years afterwards, when Alfred again visited France; but I can find no proof of this. Even suppose he had, I should still think the anecdote Harry has just read, a remarkable proof of early gratitude.

[*Harry reads.*]

About two years afterwards, king Ethelwolf determined himself to go to Rome. Alfred was now six years old, and his partial father made him the companion of his journey. They were kindly received in France by king Charles the Bald†, a grandson of Charlemagne, but a weak and unfortunate prince‡. He commanded his royal visitor and his retinue, to be conducted through his dominions with the most respectful attention.

They remained a year at Rome§. Alfred was

* Turner's Hist. vol. ii. p. 84—86, & 266. † *Ib.* p. 87.
‡ See Russel's Mod. Europe, vol. i. lett. 10. § Turner, *ib.* p. 87.

now of an age to make some comparison between that wonderful city, and his own rude and barbarous home.

The beautiful monuments of Roman art and industry in Britain, had been either ruined or defaced by the Saxons, who took and destroyed one city after another; filling their streets with fragments of ruined towers, temples, and walls. This desolation was partly owing to the natural ferocity of the Saxons, and partly to the determined resistance of the Britons. Thus, that beautiful country, which one party struggled to conquer, and the other to defend, was stripped of all its ornaments*. Probably there was not enough remaining at the time of Alfred's birth, to excite his curiosity respecting the vestiges of that mighty people, which had passed from our land like a dream. But in Rome, the relics of ancient magnificence presented themselves at every step, and, child as he was, they doubtless left a strong impression on his memory. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose, that the ideas he acquired in this journey gave the stamp to his future character.

Alfred probably lost his own mother when he was a very little boy; for, on their return home through France, Ethelwolf married Judith, the

* Henry's Hist. Eng. vol. ii. p. 379, 4to edition.

daughter of king Charles. The Francs were superior in knowledge and in civilization of manners to the other Gothic nations, and this new connexion proved an important means of improvement to Alfred.

Grief and confusion awaited Ethelwolf on his return to his own dominions. Some of his powerful subjects, indignant at the partial fondness which had induced their monarch to set aside the claims of his elder sons, took advantage of his absence, and openly revolted, declaring their intention to raise Ethelbald to the throne. The other nobles of Wessex would not permit Ethelwolf to be absolutely dethroned, and proposed an accommodation; by which he was, however, compelled to resign Wessex to his son, and to retain only the eastern provinces of his kingdom. He did not long survive the disappointment of his hopes, and it is a proof of the kindness of his nature, that he permitted his rebellious son to share his private property with his other children.

"Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land." Ethelbald neither obeyed the command, nor obtained the blessing: all that he gained by imbittering the last days of his father, was a very short interval of regal power; an interval which, in all proba-

bility, the recollection of his filial ingratitude prevented him from enjoying. He died within three years after the death of his father.

We must now return to Alfred, who during these changes had attained the age of twelve. At this time a slight circumstance gave a new bent to his thoughts. Queen Judith was sitting one day amidst her family, with a book of Saxon poetry in her hand. Now, though from want of instruction, Alfred was unable to read, he was particularly fond of Saxon poetry, and wherever there was a chance of hearing it, he was to be found, listening with eager attention. It does not appear that Judith was reading to her sons on the present occasion, but she offered to *give* the book to him who would first learn to read it. The elder princes thought the reward unequal to the trouble, and declined making the attempt; but Alfred examined the book. It was beautifully written and illuminated; and, pleased with its appearance, he inquired whether it was really true that she would give it as she had said. His mother repeated her promise. Alfred then took the book, found a person able to instruct him; and so great was his diligence, that in a very short time he both read and repeated the poem to the queen, and received it as his reward *.

*Turner, *ib.* p. 88—103; and Henry, vol. ii. p. 348.

HARRY.

I like this story very much indeed, mamma: I like to know what heroes did when they were children. You see Alfred was grateful and industrious, so he made a good beginning. How very ignorant people must have been at that time: only think of the king's favourite son not knowing how to read till after he was twelve years old!

LUCY.

I know that before the invention of printing all books must have been written; but I never heard of an *illuminated* book before. What is the meaning of that expression?

MRS. B.

Sometimes the initial letters were painted of various colours, and the margin of the page adorned with curious devices, and then the book was said to be illuminated.

LUCY.

I understand: they were something like a sheet of note paper, with an embossed border.

MRS. B.

The margins of illuminated books were *painted*, not embossed: the subjects represented on them were frequently figures of saints, wreaths of flowers, curious scrolls and flourishes. These devices were gaily coloured, and sometimes en-

riched with gilding: such books were very beautiful and curious.

HARRY.

Indeed they were; and I think Alfred's brothers were very stupid not to try for it. I am sure I would take a great deal of trouble for such a book.

LUCY.

Suppose the book had not been illuminated, but only nicely written, what a great deal of trouble and time it must have taken. Only think what labour it would be, to copy all the books in a library!

MRS. B.

For that reason books were then very scarce, and exceedingly valuable. Some time before Alfred gained his prize, a king of Northumberland gave a large estate for a single volume. It must, therefore, have been impossible for persons of moderate fortune to purchase books, and equally difficult to borrow them. As a proof of this, we are told of a king of France, who was obliged to deposit a considerable quantity of plate, and to get one of his nobles to join him in a bond, promising the payment of a large sum if he did not return the book, before he could obtain the loan of one volume*.

* Henry, *ib.* p. 367.

HARRY.

I begin to change my opinion, and am glad I did not live in the times when books were so very scarce; there would have been no chance of even *one* coming to my share, and I should have lost a great deal of pleasure.

[*He reads.*]

Alfred could now indulge his fondness for Saxon poetry whenever he pleased. He also made a little collection of psalms and prayers for his own use; and this book he always carried in his bosom.

Soon after she had thus turned the thoughts of her son to the pleasures of knowledge, Judith returned to her own country*, and Alfred was left to pursue his studies as he could. He had no great reason to be pleased with the conduct of his brothers, who withheld the large property which his father had left him; but his mind was occupied by study, and he was content with the small maintenance which they allowed him†. He soon discovered that learning to read Saxon, though a source of great amusement, by making him acquainted with the poems of his countrymen, would not store his mind with much variety of knowledge. No one had then thought of making Saxon translations of those authors

* Turner, *ib.* p. 93. † Aikin, *ib.*

who lived in the polished ages of Greece and Rome. It was therefore necessary for him to learn Latin, before he could obtain access to these treasuries of ancient wisdom. He earnestly desired to become acquainted with the beautiful compositions of historians, philosophers, and poets; but his wishes were vain. To the royal Alfred, helps which are now within the reach of every school-boy were denied. He not only wanted grammars and dictionaries, but no master capable of instructing him in Latin was at that time to be found in the kingdom of Wessex. Thus was his progress stopped for many years; and he lamented as one of his greatest misfortunes, that when he had youth and leisure, and permission to learn, he could not find teachers*.

MRS. B.

I believe many persons now living, have to lament a still greater misfortune: that, when they had youth and leisure, good instructors, and every other encouragement, they did not profit by the opportunity; but slighted those advantages, which Alfred would have made the greatest exertions to obtain.

HARRY.

I hope I shall not be one of those foolish

* Turner, *ib.* p. 104.

people; and I will think of Alfred when I feel the idle fit coming. But, mamma, did the Saxons write nothing but poetry?

MRS. B.

Their most useful works were written in Latin, which was then the common language of learned men: therefore, poor Alfred, with an ardent desire to improve his mind, was obliged to confine his reading to the rude productions of his unlettered countrymen.

HARRY.

I wonder he did not persuade some of the learned Saxons to help him. If they could write Latin, they could teach it.

MRS. B.

Learning had fallen into such neglect, that when Alfred succeeded to the throne, he believed there was not a single person to the south of the Thames, who could even translate a letter from Latin into English. In earlier times the Saxons were not so ignorant, and many books remained in the churches, but they were quite useless; for the knowledge of Latin being lost, the people were unable to read them*. We have seen, by the example of the royal family, that to read their own native language was an uncommon attainment.

* Turner p. 277, &c.

[*Harry reads.*]

In these pursuits year after year passed away, and Alfred attained the age of nineteen. His two elder brothers were dead: Ethelred succeeded to the vacant throne. He was greatly distressed by the incursions of the Danes, and summoned Alfred from his studies, to assist in the defence of the kingdom. Our young hero appears to have inherited his father's forgiving temper, but not his weakness: he quitted his beloved retirement, and fought many battles with his brother, who granted him a share of the royal dignity. At this period he married Ealswitha, the daughter of a Mercian nobleman; and in the year 871, Ethelred losing his life, in consequence of a wound received in battle, Alfred, then twenty-two years old, became sole monarch of the West Saxons. This new dignity seemed likely to prove a source of danger and anxiety, rather than of ease or splendour. The piratical Danes had laid waste great part of the kingdom, and established themselves in some of the central districts*. Within a month after Alfred's accession, they attacked and defeated his troops at Wilton: the West Saxons had then, in the short space of one year, fought eight pitched battles with the invaders, besides

*Turner, p. 125; and Aikin's Dict.

innumerable skirmishes; and, tired of perpetual warfare, the young king, after the defeat at Wilton, made peace with his enemies, who marched to London, where they took up their winter quarters*.

It is not in the first seven years of the reign of Alfred, that we must look for the traces of that wisdom and vigilance which afterwards distinguished him. The only plan he seems to have had in view during that period, was to obtain a temporary peace†. Twice he bribed the ferocious Danes to quit his dominions: they gave him oaths and hostages; and when they insulted him with fresh attacks, he was contented with new hostages and new oaths‡.

HARRY.

I do not like him now: this is not at all heroic!

[*He reads.*]

The Danes made use of the interval granted them by the supineness of Alfred, to destroy the kingdom of Mercia, which bordered upon Wessex§.

At length, being reinforced by fresh swarms of their countrymen, they resolved to make an attack on the dominions of Alfred, the sole remaining check to their power.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 160. † *Ib.* p. 174. ‡ *Ib.* p. 172. § *Ib.* p. 170.

LUCY.

I should like to know exactly, which part of England was subject to Alfred.

MRS. B.

You had better refer to the map of Saxon England*. With the exception of Cornwall, the kingdom of the West Saxons, at the time of Alfred's accession, included all the counties to the south of the Thames, and also Essex.

HARRY.

Then I suppose this map was not drawn for Alfred's reign: you see that Kent and Essex are not coloured like the rest of Alfred's dominions.

MRS. B.

No. The map represents an earlier period: the time of the Heptarchy.

HARRY.

The time of—I do not understand that word, *Heptarchy*.

MRS. B.

It is compounded of two Greek words, meaning *seven*, and *government*. It denotes a country governed by seven persons, or divided into seven kingdoms†.

HARRY.

I might have put them together if I had not

* See Wilkinson's Atlas Classica. † See Chambers's Dict.

been stupid, since I knew the meaning of *hept*-agon, and of mon-*archy*. It is very tiresome that I cannot recollect what I know, at the minute I want it.

MRS. B.

I will tell you the chief reason of that infirmity, my dear boy. It is less trouble to ask a question, than to consider a difficulty; therefore, you like better to depend upon me, than to exercise your judgment. If you took time to think, you could often answer your own inquiries. I advise you to try, and you will soon become quicker in recollection.

[*Harry reads.*]

In the month of January, 878, the Danes advanced into Wessex, and took possession of Chippenham, where they passed the remainder of the winter, and pillaged the neighbouring country in frequent excursions. We are not informed that Alfred made the slightest attempt to oppose these ravages; and while he suffered his country thus to fall an undefended prey to the invaders, many of his subjects emigrated to France: the rest, overawed by the Danes, submitted to their power. The king, who by a strange inattention to the feelings and the sufferings of his people, appears to have lost their confidence and affection, was obliged to become a fugitive; preserving his life by such close con-

cealment, that his friends and enemies were equally ignorant of his fate *.

LUCY.

This is very strange indeed—very different from any idea I ever formed of Alfred. I did not know that he had any faults.

MRS. B.

Perfect characters are not to be found in *true* stories, my dear Lucy. But let us read on: it is well worth while to pay close attention to the faults and the virtues of such a man.

[*Harry reads.*]

It is not on slight grounds we assert that Alfred had lost the affections of his people. Several of the old Saxon writers speak in very severe terms of his misconduct, during the first years of his reign. The evidence of Asser is of the greatest importance, for he was Alfred's confidential friend, was much attached to him, and therefore would not have magnified his faults.

Asser avows his belief that the king's adversity was *not unmerited;* because, in the first part of his reign, when his subjects came to him, and implored protection from oppressors, or assist-

* Turner, *ib.* p. 175—179. If the young reader has access to both works, he may be amused by comparing these pages of Turner, with Hume, vol. i. p. 79 & 80.

ance in distress, he would not listen to them; but treated them as unworthy of his notice*.

HARRY.

Then he deserved to be abandoned when his difficulties came upon him. Oh, I could not have believed that Alfred was such a bad king! I shall never know what to think about characters, mamma.

MRS. B.

You must be cautious in forming your opinion, and examine thoroughly before you pretend to judge.

[*Harry reads.*]

Asser also informs us, that a relation of the king's, named St. Neot, deeply lamented his imprudent conduct, and foretold that the greatest adversity would befal him; but Alfred paid no attention to his admonitions, and treated his prediction with disdain†. We are not writing the character of a fictitious hero, but of a real prince; we must therefore describe him as he was: but while we lament his errors, we shall be surprised to find, that after indulging an arrogant and selfish temper, till he had attained the age of twenty-eight, he had then the noble fortitude to conquer his bad habits—to devote all the powers of his mind to the benefit of his

* Turner, p. 180—183. † *Ib.* p. 184.

people; and this, under circumstances which would have disabled a common man from making the least exertion.

HARRY.

If you can explain these circumstances, dear mamma, I wish you would. The story goes on to a different subject.

MRS. B.

They refer to the health of Alfred, and offer the best apology we can frame, for the inactivity of our hero during the first years of his reign.

Two years before his accession, amidst the festivities that attended the celebration of his marriage, he was suddenly attacked with a violent internal pain. The cause of his suffering was never discovered by the physicians, neither could they by any means relieve it. The remainder of his life was therefore afflicted by this terrible disorder; and so great was the anguish he endured, that, if for a little time the pain abated, the dread of its speedy and inevitable return prevented the enjoyment of such intervals of ease*.

LUCY.

Poor Alfred! This was a dreadful misfortune indeed! No wonder he wished to be quiet. But, mamma, I think this is not a good reason

* Turner, p. 392.

for treating the advice of Neot with contempt, and refusing to relieve the distresses of his people. I should have thought, that suffering so much himself would have made him compassionate.

Mrs. B.

Though Alfred's bodily sufferings may account for his inactivity, or at least in great measure excuse it, I believe there were other reasons for his careless disregard of his people, which I will endeavour to explain. We have seen that Ethelwolf was an unwise father, and that his partiality for his youngest son introduced discord and rebellion into his family and kingdom. Other evils usually attend parental injustice, which fall heavily on the favourite.

It is not likely that *he* should be loved by his brothers and sisters, who is the means of depriving them of their just place in their father's affection. Thus cut off from that sweet and equal intercourse, which has so powerful an effect in promoting generous feelings, the favourite can hardly avoid acquiring a cold, selfish, and haughty temper.

After the death of Ethelwolf, we have seen that Queen Judith turned the thoughts of Alfred to the pleasures of learning. Now, when pride has taken root in the heart, the most commendable pursuits may have an unfavourable

effect upon the character. The natural arrogance of Alfred appears to have been increased, by the comparison which he made between his own attainments and the gross ignorance of those who surrounded him. When he was called from retirement and meditation, to govern a nation of barbarians, he seems to have felt utter contempt for them; while they, on their part, despising books and learned men, were provoked by the careless indifference with which their studious monarch treated their complaints*.

HARRY.

I think it would have been better for Alfred to have remained in ignorance, than to have made such a bad use of his knowledge.

MRS. B.

Do you clearly understand, dearest Harry, what is meant by a state of probation? and why this life is said to be such a state?

HARRY.

I am not very sure, but I believe that probation means trial; and this life is a trial whether we are fit to live in a better world.

MRS. B.

Very right. And as we cannot judge of a trial in a court of law, without hearing *the whole* of the evidence; neither can we judge of what

* Turner, p. 186.

is best for us, by considering only *one part* of our moral trial, or state of probation. The events of our whole lives, my dear Harry, are ordered by an infinitely wise and merciful Being, who pities our infirmities, and often permits even the faults into which we fall to become the means of our correction and amendment. For instance, what a powerful motive to speak the truth is presented to those who have experienced the danger and disgrace which often attend lying. But we will now confine ourselves to the case of Alfred. He made a bad use of his superior knowledge, sought only his own pleasure, and despised every body about him. But while he was thus earnestly pursuing the knowledge on which he set so false a value, prizing it for itself, and not as a means of doing good, he acquired habits of thinking and reasoning; and it was upon *these* habits that his reformation was founded. When adversity compelled him to give up his studies, he applied his powers of reflection to the common affairs of life, he considered the consequences of his actions; and thus, his studious habits, which had nourished his pride, and alienated his people, proved the means of enlightening his understanding, correcting his temper, and reforming his conduct.

LUCY.

Then our very faults are intended to be the

means of making us better. You never told us any thing that was so great a proof of the goodness of Providence.

MRS. B.

Whether this benevolent arrangement can be of any use to *us*, must depend upon ourselves. If we, when we are convinced of our faults, wilfully persist in them, our hearts will become hardened, and our improvement hopeless. Let us now proceed with our story, and observe how Alfred gained the knowledge of himself.

[*Harry reads.*]

It was in the disguise of a common soldier that Alfred escaped from the court. For greater security he soon quitted his companions, and fled into the woods. He continued his solitary journey, hiding himself in the wilds and thickets through which he passed. Not knowing whither to go, nor whom to trust, he wandered on as accident or necessity directed, till he reached Somersetshire, where he found a place surrounded by marshes and water, which promised a safe retreat from his enemies.

In this solitary journey he entered the cottage of a swine-herd, who inquired why he was lurking in that lonely place. The king replied that he was one of Alfred's attendants, who had fled from a fatal battle, and wanted to be concealed from pursuit. The good peasant, pitying his

forlorn situation, received him hospitably, little suspecting the rank of his guest, who, in his turn, was desirous of showing his gratitude, by making himself useful to his host.

One Sunday, when the peasant was absent with his charge, his wife, who had been making bread, put her cakes on the hearth to bake; and having desired Alfred, who sat by the fire, trimming his bow and arrows, to take care of them, went away to pursue her other employments.

Thus left to himself and his own sad thoughts, Alfred quite forgot the bread. His hostess returned, saw the fate of her cakes, and running in a rage to the fire, she poured forth her indignation against the soldier; telling him, she saw daily that he was a great eater, and yet he would not turn the cakes to prevent their being spoiled! These harsh expressions were enough to provoke the haughty temper of the king; but he saw the necessity of yielding to circumstances, and subduing his rising anger, he answered mildly, that he should indeed be slothful, if he could not perform so trifling a service. He then applied himself attentively to this new occupation, and carefully baked his hostess's bread*.

* Turner, p. 189—192.

HARRY.

There is not a word of this in "Evenings at Home." Ella comes in with his sword drawn, while they are eating the burnt cakes for supper; and then the cottagers find out who Alfred is, directly.

LUCY.

Oh! that is only a drama, you know; and we never expect all the little circumstances to be quite true. But do you think it right, even in a drama, to give false ideas of real *characters*, mamma? In "Evenings at Home," Alfred is represented as being a very good king, and greatly beloved by his subjects, at the time of this adventure.

MRS. B.

Certainly not. Whenever we speak of real characters, it should be with strict regard to truth. Asser not only states that the adversity of Alfred was *not unmerited;* but that he was depressed *by the contempt of his people**. Yet I have just been reading a sketch of his character, in which he is represented as *a perfect prince*†. It is a pity to describe him so partially; because it deprives those of the benefit of his successful example, who are sensible of their faults, and desirous to correct them.

* Turner, p. 137. † Aikin, *ib.*

[*Harry reads.*]

It is probable that, in this humble cottage, many useful lessons were deeply impressed on the heart of Alfred. The conversation of his hosts and their occasional guests, must have often turned on the miseries of the times; and the disguised monarch might hear his own faults severely censured, as the principal cause of the distresses of his people *. His dependance on the kindness of a rude, unlettered peasant, for shelter and support, would teach him the folly of that arrogance with which he had once regarded his ignorant subjects, as beings unworthy of his notice. He no longer looked down upon his fellow-creatures, as from a lofty tower, whence they appeared as pigmies, with whom he could have no natural connexion. He was now among them, on a level with the lowest; and he saw them in their just proportions. It is likely that his strong sense of gratitude assisted in dispelling the illusions of pride, and rendered him more easily convinced of the duties which man owes to man; and from which the highest rank affords no exemption. Thus applying his previous habits of reflection to the real business of life, he gained instruction from every event, and nobly profited by the lessons of adversity.

* Turner, p. 192.

From a keen sense of our faults arises a firm determination to correct them. This appears to have been the progress of reformation in the mind of Alfred, who was now resolved to subdue his habits of self-indulgence, and to devote his life to the benefit of his people.

During his residence in the cottage of the swine-herd, or soon after it, he discovered a re-retreat peculiarly fitted by nature to become a secure asylum. It was a few acres of firm ground, in a morass formed by the confluence of the Parret and the Thone. It contained a wood of alders, which abounded with stags and goats. There was no means of entering this little island, except by small vessels*.

When Easter had passed, which in that year happened on the 23rd of March†, Alfred began to execute his new scheme of operations, with courage and hopes afresh excited by intelligence of the recent defeat and death of Hubba, one of the most formidable of the Danish chieftains. About this time the king chanced to meet with some of his subjects, who were fugitives like himself: he imparted his plans to them, and obtained their concurrence. Their first object was to fortify the little island, and at the same time to obtain

* Turner, p. 196. † *Ib.* p. 201, *note.*

an easier entrance to it. A long bridge was therefore constructed; and on the western end of the bridge they built a strong fort, which effectually prevented the approach of an enemy*. To this place Alfred gave the name of Æthlingey, or Isle of Nobles. It is now Athelney†.

HARRY.

I will look in the map for it directly. Oh, I should like to see Alfred's little island!

MRS. B.

You had better look at a modern map first; for you will not find the names of those rivers in the Saxon map. Here is the Parret, which empties itself into Bridgewater Bay: about ten miles below Taunton it is joined by the Thone; and this junction of two rivers is called their *confluence*.

HARRY.

Thank you, mamma. I see the place exactly; and now I will find it in "Saxon England." Ah! that old spelling would have puzzled me, if I had not known the situation of the rivers. And now I see the use of comparing maps.

[*He reads.*]

When the king and his friends had thus secured the approach to their island, he seems to have been joined by his wife and family.

* Turner, p. 197. ‡ Aikin, *ib.*

The number of his companions increased also; and, assisted by them, Alfred began to make excursions against the enemy, whenever a favourable opportunity presented. Though the number of his adherents was small, they were formidable from their union and their courage. Their first attempts were not very successful; but they learned prudence from defeat, and returned to the combat with fresh energy. Their numbers and confidence gradually increased, and sometimes they obtained the victory. By day and by night they were ever rushing from the woods and marshes, on the Danes; and when repulsed by a force superior to their own, they retired to their unknown asylum, with a swiftness which baffled pursuit, and soon harassed the enemy with hostilities in a different quarter.

The spoils gained by Alfred and his friends, in these excursions, contributed to their support. They also had recourse to hunting and fishing; but their stock of provisions was sometimes nearly exhausted, as we learn from the following anecdote.

One day, when his friends were abroad in search of food, the king sat alone, reading, according to his usual custom. He was interrupted by a feeble knock at his gate, and heard the voice of some poor wanderer soliciting relief. Alfred remembered the distressed state in

which, a few months before, he had himself arrived in this solitary place. He laid down his book, and called his wife to give the poor man some food. The queen found one loaf only in their store; and this would not be sufficient for their own family, when the absent members of it returned from their expedition. Alfred thought that the wants of the beggar were more pressing than his own, and, dividing the loaf, he reserved part of it for his friends, and gave the rest to the hungry stranger*.

LUCY.

Come, I am glad he begins to be compassionate! Go on, Harry. I have more pleasure in hearing you now.

[*Harry reads.*]

The excursions so frequently made by the brave inhabitants of Æthlingey, not only supplied their wants, but afforded Alfred an opportunity of again inuring himself to warlike habits, and practising the various duties of a skilful general. He increased his knowledge of the country, collected perpetual intelligence of the motions of the Danes; and, what was of more consequence than all the rest, he secured the attachment of his friends, and gradually

* Turner, *ib.* p. 197—200.

reviving their spirits, prepared them for that grand attempt which he was meditating *.

In the early part of his reign, Alfred appears to have devoted the powers of his mind to his own advancement in knowledge, regardless of the duties which he owed to his subjects. Adversity had taught him a new lesson. He now perceived the necessity of exerting himself for the benefit of others; and the scheme he first formed, was one which, if crowned with success, was well calculated to restore him to the confidence of his people. His project was no less than to surprise the great Danish army, which still remained in Wiltshire; and he resolved to go and observe the situation of his enemies himself, that he might form his plan of action, so as to suit the circumstances of the case more exactly than he could do from the report of another. His early fondness for music and poetry proved very useful on this occasion. So true it is, that every kind of knowledge is made serviceable, when we are influenced by a strong desire of accomplishing our undertakings. Alfred now assumed the disguise of a harper, and boldly entered the Danish camp†.

* Turner, p. 199.

† *Ib.* p. 201. This circumstance is doubted by a late writer.

HARRY.

Is this *true*, mamma? It does not seem like the adventure of a *real* king.

MRS. B.

I believe it is true, Harry. You will often find that real histories are quite as surprising as fiction, and much more entertaining. Come, let us hear the adventures of the royal harper.

[*Harry reads.*]

The harp and talents of the wandering minstrel attracted so much notice, that he was introduced to the tent of Guthrum, the Danish chieftain, where he had an opportunity of hearing the secret counsels of his foes, and of observing that they were entirely off their guard. Nothing could be more favourable to the designs of Alfred, who diverted the Danes so much with his music and pleasantries, that they detained him for several days in their camp*. He departed unsuspected, and reached Æthlingey in safety. It was now Whitsuntide†, a time of year favourable for military operations, and he despatched trusty messengers to the nobles of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Hampshire, commanding them secretly to collect their followers,

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 54. † Turner, *ib.* p. 202.

and meet him in arms on a certain day, at Brixton, near Selwood forest*.

MRS. B.

That will be a very good place to leave off, I think.

HARRY.

What! before we know whether he will beat the Danes or not!

MRS. B.

Indeed, Harry, it is too late to fight a battle to-night: we must defer that exploit till to-morrow. Leave Alfred, to rest himself and prepare to meet his subjects.

HARRY.

Certainly, if you desire it; but I think he would have found rest particularly agreeable just *after* the battle. Good night, dearest mother!

The next evening it was Lucy's turn to read, and she continued the story of Alfred as follows.

The Anglo Saxons had suffered severely during the concealment of their king, and they heard with joy that he was still alive, and ready to put himself at their head. Inspired with fresh

* Turner, and Henry, *ib.*

hopes, all those intrusted with the secret repaired to the place appointed, where they received Alfred with eager congratulations. They encamped for the night: the next day they marched to Ecglea*; and early the following morning moved rapidly forward to Eddington, near Westbury, where the Danes were encamped in careless security.

The king and his brave followers rushed on their enemies, with an impetuosity which they were wholly unable to resist. Astonished at the presence of Alfred, who seemed risen from the grave to punish the oppressors of his country, they offered no regular opposition. Numbers were slain in tumultuous flight, and others fled to a neighbouring fortification, leaving Alfred master of the field. He followed up with steady resolution the advantage which he had gained, pursued the Danes to their fortress, and encamped around it. By this measure he cut them off from all supplies, either of men or provisions, and confined them to the scanty stores which happened to be in the fort. While the siege lasted, the army of the king increased so rapidly, from the reviving hopes and confidence of his subjects, that the Danes lost every chance

* Supposed to be the village now called Leigh.—Turner, p. 203, *note*.

of effecting their deliverance. They held out for fourteen days, and then, exhausted by fatigue and hunger, they implored the mercy of the conqueror*.

HARRY.

Then they were completely in Alfred's power. If he treats them cruelly, he is a great way yet from being good.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Ambition and revenge appear to have formed no part of Alfred's character. Instead of slaughtering the unhappy men, whom the fortune of war had placed at his disposal, he formed the benevolent design of making them useful and happy, and offered them the following terms: that, if they would become Christians, and join with him in preventing the ravages of the other Danes, he would spare their lives, take them under his protection, and grant them lands to cultivate for their own advantage. These conditions were joyfully received by men who probably expected nothing but immediate destruction. Guthrum and his followers were baptized†. The chief remained for twelve days with the king, as his guest, and received magnificent presents at his departure‡.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 204. † Henry, *ib.* p. 55. ‡ Turner, *ib.* p. 207.

LUCY.

Mamma, I do not understand Alfred's way of making Christians; and I am afraid Guthrum only pretended to be one, in order to please the king, who had him in his power.

MRS. B.

No doubt that was his motive at the time; but he probably listened to religious instructions, and became more enlightened afterwards. One thing at least is certain, that he was sincere in the promises he made to Alfred; because he faithfully observed them, when a powerful temptation afterwards occurred, which would have induced him to break his engagements had he been so inclined.

HARRY.

Guthrum might be sincere and grateful, but still I think it would have been a surer way to drive those cruel Danes fairly out of England.

MRS. B.

Alfred did not run so great a risk as might be imagined. He knew that a body of Danes who had settled in Northumberland, were applying themselves to agriculture: these people remained quietly in their new possessions, and took no part in Guthrum's invasion of Wessex. He might therefore conclude, that the defeated chief and his followers would gladly adopt the same habits of life, if they had the opportunity*.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 208.

Suppose that Alfred had endeavoured to destroy Guthrum, and to expel all the Danes from England, according to your plan, Harry: the new settlers in Northumberland, then so quiet and peaceable, would have been afresh plunged into their old lawless habits; and Alfred, now on the point of regaining possession of his kingdom, would have to engage in another war, with a force still greater than that which had already driven him from his throne, and oppressed and impoverished his subjects. Alfred had the wisdom to perceive that his enemies might exist, without endangering either his own honour or the safety of his people. He knew that he might keep possession of Mercia, which would greatly increase the strength of his dominions; and afford him a reasonable prospect of security. With this arrangement he was content *.

Read on, my dear Lucy: let us see whether he had reason to repent it.

[*Lucy reads.*]

When Guthrum left Chippenham he went to Cirencester, where he probably collected his scattered followers. The next year he marched into East Anglia, the province assigned him by his generous conqueror: he divided the lands among his soldiers, who applied themselves to

* Turner, *ib.* p. 209.

the cultivation of their separate shares; and thus, a horde of barbarous savages became a society of peaceable citizens*.

LUCY.

By this map of Saxon England, East Anglia seems to have contained the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon.

MRS. B.

Yes: those counties had formerly constituted the kingdom of the East Angles. Alfred also gave Essex to Guthrum; thus the Thames and the Lea became his boundaries. He afterwards placed Northumbria, which, you see, included all the counties between the Humber and Severus's wall, under the command of Guthred, another Danish chief; and the triangle between Severus's wall and the Tweed, which forms the northern extremity of England, was governed by an officer named Egbert. The sovereignty of Mercia, on the defeat of the Danes, also fell into the power of Alfred: he did not, however, incorporate that province with his own kingdom, but appointed Ethelred to govern it; and to him, when she was old enough to form such a connexion, he married his daughter Ethelfleda. For himself, he appears to have been satisfied with such an acknowledgement of superiority

*Turner, *ib.* p. 207.

from these princes, as would secure their concurrence in the regulations he judged necessary for the general safety of the country *.

HARRY.

Then he gained nothing for himself, and was only king of the West Saxons after all †!

MRS. B.

He was content with his own dominions; for he did not think that the glory of a king consists in extending his territory, but in promoting, by wise laws and good example, the civilization and happiness of his people. Go on, my dear Lucy.

[*Lucy reads.*]

An unexpected event soon proved that those principles of justice and benevolence, which are allowed to be the best guides for the conduct of private individuals, also constitute the true policy of kings. Hastings, one of the most skilful and enterprising of the Danish pirates, arrived in the Thames with a large fleet, hoping to engage Guthrum's assistance in undertaking a new war. But that prince was not unmindful of his obligations to Alfred: he would neither enter into alliance with Hastings, nor afford him the least encouragement. Thus disappointed in

* Turner, *ib.* p. 211, 212, *see note.*

† Athelstan, the grandson of Alfred, was the first Saxon monarch of all England. See Turner, vol. iii. p. 38; and Henry, vol. ii. p. 71.

his expectations, the pirate, after spending the winter at Fulham, availed himself of the return of spring to try his fortune in Flanders.

An interval of fifteen years succeeded, in which Alfred was at liberty to pursue his wise plans for the benefit of his subjects. One great object of his care was to fortify the kingdom against hostile attacks. He rebuilt the cities and castles which had been destroyed, and raised new fortifications where they were wanted. These measures were calculated to awe the Danes who were already settled in the country; and Alfred resolved to establish a fleet, as the most likely means of preventing any future attempts to land on his coasts. Thus he may be considered as the founder of the English navy *.

HARRY.

I am very glad we owe that to him. It was a capital invention!

MRS. B.

The praise of *invention* is not, however, due to Alfred on this occasion. He does not appear to have been fond of novelty, but to have aimed at making the best use of the experience of others. Charlemagne had adopted this plan with success, and Alfred only copied his example †.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 213, &c. † *Ib.* p. 214.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Armed vessels were now distributed in proper stations round the island, and they pursued the Danes whenever they attempted to land; or if they happened at any time to effect their purpose, they were encountered by the English in their retreat, and total destruction was often the punishment of the depredations they had committed*.

As Alfred never engaged in war but from a necessity which he lamented, it might be supposed that he was deficient in the talents of a general; yet his defence of England, against a formidable attack of the veteran Hastings, shows that, had he desired military glory, he might have obtained it.

That daring pirate, who was skilled in the arts of war by thirty years' practice, and renowned for the success of his arms†, attacked Alfred under circumstances of peculiar advantage. Guthrum and Guthred, the Danish princes of East Anglia and Northumbria, were both dead‡; and, in forming his plan of invasion, Hastings seems to have been influenced by the persuasion, that his countrymen who were settled in England, and now no longer governed by the princes so much indebted to Alfred,

* Hume, *ib.* p. 86. † Turner, p. 210. ‡ Hume, p. 87.

would not be displeased at seeing him attacked; and perhaps might even be inclined to assist in lessening his power. He therefore resolved not to provoke them by invading their territory, but to land in Kent, which was subject to Alfred, and so near to the Danes in Essex, that it afforded them an opportunity of assisting his designs if he were successful, or of granting him a shelter in case of defeat.

In pursuance of this plan, Hastings sent 250 ships to the south-western extremity of Kent. The invaders landed near Romney marsh, and, drawing their ships four miles up the river Rother, they seized a fortification which the peasants of the country were erecting, and built a stronger fort themselves at Apuldore, on the same river.

Hastings was not with this division of the fleet: he entered the mouth of the Thames with 80 ships, navigated them into the East Swale, and effected a landing at Milton, near Sittingbourne, where he erected a strong fortification. This distribution of his forces showed great skill: the two armies were only twenty miles asunder, and could act separately, or unite their forces, as circumstances might require. The neighbourhood of their countrymen in Essex, secured them from apprehension of being attacked on the right; the sea was on the left; and behind

them lay the fertile districts in the east of Kent, which they thus obtained without striking a blow. Hastings having now secured a safe position, and means of procuring supplies, with courage and policy he might hope to convert Kent into an independent kingdom.

The invader had judged rightly of the dispositions of the East Anglian Danes. No longer restrained by the faithful Guthrum, the presence and example of Hastings presented a temptation too strong for their new habits to resist. When the army of the adventurer made excursions into the country, they joined him, and sometimes engaged in such enterprises by themselves*.

Again compelled to take the field in defence of the lives and liberties of his people, Alfred's cool judgment distinguished the attack which was really dangerous, from that which was only vexatious and temporary. He left the inhabitants of the districts harassed by the East Anglians, to defend themselves, while he turned his whole attention to the proceedings of Hastings. Collecting his army, he encamped in a favourable situation between the two divisions of the Danes. A forest on one side, and water on the other, protected his flanks; and here with steady courage he watched the motions

* Turner, *ib.* p. 220—222.

of the enemy. Ever prepared to punish any attempt of the invaders to penetrate further into the country, he appears to have avoided risking a general engagement. The discretion and activity of the Saxon king awed even Hastings: it was so unlike the disorderly warfare in which he had been accustomed to engage, that he did not know what to think of his cautious adversary*.

LUCY.

I wonder how Alfred came to think of this plan: it is very different from his own former conduct!

MRS. B.

Though it was the lot of Alfred to be so much engaged in war, he appears to have been compelled to it by the exigences of the times. We have seen him sheathe his sword in the moment of victory, grant the most favourable terms to his cruel enemies, and overcome the ferocity of their natures by the influence of his liberal and benevolent policy. You seem surprised, Lucy, that he did not immediately rush upon the Danes, as he had done at Eddington; but you must recollect that Hastings was a very skilful general, and fully on his guard, therefore the risk would be greater. Besides, I am inclined to think it likely, that Alfred might now

*Turner, *ib.* p. 223, &c.

be guiding his own conduct by the successful experience of others: you know, this was his favourite practice.

HARRY.

Whose example do you suppose he was thinking of, dear mamma?

MRS. B.

About seven years before this event, he had learned to read Latin. He was very fond of reading the actions of illustrious men*; and perhaps he had met with the story of the Roman Fabius, who successfully defended his country when invaded by Hannibal, in consequence of adhering firmly to this cautious plan of defence.

HARRY.

Oh, I dare say that *was* the reason! And, mamma, I should like to hear the story of Fabius myself; and I wish very much to know who taught Alfred Latin. Will you tell me all about it, dearest mother?

MRS. B.

We shall hear, by and by, how Alfred learned Latin; but as the story of Fabius belongs to a different age and country, I think we had better leave it to another time. Read on, Lucy.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The defensive plan of Alfred required time;

*Turner, *ib.* p. 200.

but the Saxon armies were not accustomed to remain long in the field: it was therefore necessary to think of some new expedient. The king divided his army into two bodies; of these, one remained with him in the camp, while the other returned to their usual occupations. After a reasonable time they changed places; the inhabitants of the camp returned to their homes, and a fresh army was ready for service. Thus, while Alfred avoided the necessity of attacking his enemies, he always presented to them a strong and undiminished force.

Surprised more than ever by this new and regular system, the Danes remained discontented and overawed in their camps. The East Anglians, who watched the motions of Hastings, also forbore making any attempt of consequence, while he remained inactive. Wearied at length, of a confinement so injurious to the spirits and courage of his followers, Hastings resolved to free himself if possible. He instantly embarked in his ships; and at the same time his main army, which lay at Apuldore, suddenly rose from their encampment, and marching rapidly, passed beyond the army of Alfred into the interior of the country*.

* Turner, 224, &c. and Hume, p. 87.

Their object was to reach the Thames where it was fordable, and to pass into Essex, where they would be amongst their friends, and might unite and form new plans. But Alfred, ever on his guard, though they had passed him by surprise, did not allow them leisure to execute their design. He pursued with all speed, and overtaking them at Farnham, in Surry, defeated and completely routed them. They fled towards the Thames, and plunged into its stream to escape from pursuit. Those who could swim crossed over into Middlesex: thither Alfred followed, chased them through that county into Essex, and drove them across Essex over the river Coln. At length the fugitives took refuge in Mersey, a small island at the mouth of the Coln; and as their situation secured them from attack, the king resolved to confine them to the asylum they had chosen.

Things were in this situation, when, at the instigation of Hastings, the Danish colonies in Northumberland and East Anglia united in a plan of relieving their blockaded companions, by finding employment for Alfred in another quarter. They passed the North Foreland with a hundred ships, and sailed along the southern coast; while another fleet succeeded in passing round the north of Scotland. Their scheme was to attack the coast of Devonshire in two places

at once. The fleet which came from the north entered the Bristol Channel, and attacked a fortress in the northern part of Devonshire; while the forces conveyed in the larger fleet, which had coasted along the southern shores, besieged Exeter.

When this intelligence was brought to the king, he resolved to run every hazard rather than suffer Exeter to fall into the power of the Danes; and leaving the greater part of his army to continue the blockade of Mersey, he hastened with all his cavalry across the country to Exeter, which he reached with so much expedition, that he came quite unexpectedly upon the besiegers. They did not venture to contend with Alfred in person, but hastily raising the siege, they regained their ships, and once more committed themselves to the ocean. On their return along the southern shore, they attacked Chichester; but the brave citizens repulsed them, killed many hundreds, and took some of their ships*.

HARRY.

Oh, mamma! I am glad your story mentions this. Why, it must have been the very battle you were telling us of when we were at Bow-hill. I wish Alfred had been in it himself. I should like to know that *he* had been here; but I will

* Turner, p. 225—230.

think of him whenever we walk where I can see the ridge of Bow-hill, and those tumuli rising against the clear sky.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Though Alfred had thus succeeded in raising the siege of Exeter, he had many other conflicts with the Danes. Twice the wife and children of Hastings fell into his power, and, with a magnanimity worthy of more enlightened times, he loaded them with presents, and sent them back to his enemy*.

For three years Hastings contended undismayed, with the activity, the power, and the wisdom of Alfred. At length he began to feel that his courage was useless and his efforts vain. He yielded indignantly to necessity, and disbanded his despairing followers, who retired to their ships, and endeavoured to revenge themselves by piracy on the coast of Wessex. But even through the ocean the genius of Alfred pursued them. The ships made under his directions were superior to any others then to be seen in Europe; and the exertions of his navy at length proved the means of terminating this dreadful war. Another calamity attended or immediately succeeded its conclusion: this was a pestilence, which continued its devastations for

* Turner, p. 230.

three years, carrying off vast numbers of every rank*.

LUCY.

I do not quite understand this, mamma. It seems as if the war was the cause of the pestilence; but how could that be?

MRS. B.

Our accounts of that remote period are so imperfect, that I cannot answer your question exactly. It is very probable that the ravages of war might occasion that calamity, because we know that now they frequently do produce it.

HARRY.

Will you explain that, mamma? I have no notion how it can be.

MRS. B.

One reason is the waste, and what is worse, the wilful destruction of the products of the earth, which is occasioned by war. Now, the want of a sufficient quantity of wholesome food is a frequent cause of contagious diseases. There is still another reason. Frequently after a battle, hundreds of wounded men are crowded together in close hospitals, where, deprived of the blessings of fresh air and cleanliness, their disorders become infectious, and they perish miserably, victims to the rashness and ambition

* Turner, *ib.* p. 239—243.

of powerful men. From the hospital, contagion often spreads to the peaceful inhabitants of the city, who, having already suffered from the scarcity of provisions, are rendered more liable to disease*. Now I think you must understand why there is a natural connexion between war, famine, and pestilence.

[*Lucy reads.*]

For four years after the expulsion of Hastings, Alfred reigned in great honour and happiness; beloved by his subjects, dreaded by his enemies, and enjoying universal respect and esteem: incessantly employed in strengthening, enriching, and adorning his dominions; and in securing them against the return of their enemies, by a powerful fleet. This happy period was not of long duration, for this excellent prince died on the 28th of October, in the year 901, in the fifty-third year of his age, and the thirtieth of his reign†.

Let us return again to the youth of Alfred, and take a clearer view of his character, than was possible amid the tumult of battles. In many respects, his example is both useful and encouraging to those of every station. The early period of his childhood passed away in ignorance:

*As an illustration, we may refer to the situation of Leipzig, in 1813.

† Henry, vol. ii. p. 58.

he was twelve years old before he could even read. This was the fault of others; but the eagerness with which he sought opportunities of acquiring knowledge, was a merit of his own*. When he succeeded to the throne, and gained the means of obtaining further instruction, what fortitude, what industry was necessary to enable him to profit by it. Daily and nightly he suffered from a most painful disorder: he had all the duties to fulfil which belonged to his high station, and was, as we have seen, harassed almost beyond our conception by the fierce aggressions of the Danes. His temper had been injured by the early indulgence of a weak and partial father; and, till the age of eight-and-twenty, he appears to have neglected the duties of his station, and estranged himself from the affections of his people. These evils seem to have been produced by carelessness, selfishness, and pride, faults more common, perhaps, than any others; faults too often considered of small importance, but which, if not conquered in early youth, will become too powerful for ordinary minds to subdue. And should we fancy that at some future period our heroism will be equal to that of Alfred, how can we know that our lives may be lengthened; or, if they should, that

*Turner, *ib.* p. 251.

Providence will so order events as to awaken us to reflection? It was in the cottage of the hospitable peasant that he appears to have resolved on his new course of life. It is pleasing to observe the manner in which Alfred evinced his gratitude to this humble friend: perceiving him to be a man of capacity, he recommended him to apply to what he seems to have considered the greatest earthly good, the acquisition of knowledge: he advised the peasant to become a priest, and afterwards made him Bishop of Winchester *.

When Alfred, by succeeding to the royal dignity, became possessed of power to indulge in his favourite pursuits, he sent every where for instructors capable of translating those books with which he so anxiously desired to become acquainted. He invited them to his court, rewarded them bountifully, and by their incessant exertions he obtained the information he sought. We have mentioned Asser, who wrote the life of his royal friend: this is the story of their connexion.

Alfred, who was ever inquiring for men celebrated for learning and virtue, heard so favourable a report of Asser, a Benedictine monk at St. David's, that he sent messengers to invite him

* Turner, *ib.* 192.

to court. The following is Asser's account of this event. "I was called by the king from the western extremities of Wales: I accompanied my conductors to Sussex, and first saw him in the royal city of Dene. I was benignantly received by him: amongst other conversation, he asked me earnestly to devote myself to his service, and to become his companion. He requested me to leave all my preferments beyond the Severn, and he promised to compensate for them by greater possessions *."

HARRY.

This is just what I like, mamma! I like to hear the very words of the people who were present. I am glad we have Asser's account of this meeting, and glad that Alfred sometimes lived in Sussex. We have several *Deans* now; East Dean, and Horn Dean, and West Dean. Oh, I wish I knew the very spot where Alfred's royal city stood!

MRS. B.

Horn Dean is in Hampshire, you know. It is East Dean which is supposed to have been the residence of Alfred. Whether his "royal city" was a town, or only a fortified palace, is doubtful. Some part of it remained for several

* Turner, *ib.* p. 261—263.

centuries after the Norman conquest; it was then used as a hunting-tower, and stood within a large enclosure or park *.

HARRY.

Will you take us to East Dean, mamma, that we may search for the ruins of it?

MRS. B.

The attempt would be hopeless, my dear boy. No trace of either park or tower is now to be seen. But perhaps we may ride to East Dean some day: its situation will give you a favourable opinion of Alfred's taste. That district is varied by downs and forest-land, and abounds in those beautiful groves of beech which so frequently ornament our Sussex landscapes†.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Asser expressing some hesitation at quitting his residence without necessity, and merely for profit, Alfred replied, "If this will not suit you, accommodate me with at least half of your time. Be with me six months, and pass the rest in Wales." Asser still declined to engage himself, till he had consulted his friends. The king condescended to repeat his solicitations, and Asser promised to return to him within half a year. A day was then fixed for his visit, and Asser,

*Dallaway.

†Dallaway's Western Sussex. *See East Dean.* p. 174 & 176. Paroch. Hist.

after remaining three days with the king, quitted him to go home.

The good Welshman, however, proceeded no further than Winton; he was there seized with a fever, which continued to oppress him for a year. The day appointed for the visit arrived, but no Asser made his appearance. Alfred sent letters to inquire the reason of this delay, and to request him to hasten his journey. Asser, unable to travel, wrote to inform the king of his illness. When he recovered, having received the consent of his friends, he determined to spend the half of every year with Alfred, and he has left us an account of his first visit. "I was honourably received," says he, "in the royal city of Leonaford, and that time staid eight months in his court. I translated and read to him whatever books he wished, which were within our reach; for it was his peculiar and perpetual custom, day and night, amidst all his afflictions of mind and body, either to read books himself, or to have them read to him by others*.

HARRY.

It is impossible this can be true. Neither Alfred, nor any body else, could live without sleep!

* Turner, *ib.* to 264.

MRS. B.

Asser could not intend to convey such an idea. I suppose he means that when Alfred's painful illness prevented him from sleeping, he had some person at hand to read to him, that the time might not pass without improvement.

HARRY.

Ah, poor Alfred! his illness was a great misfortune. I am very sorry that he suffered so much.

MRS. B.

Alfred does not appear to have considered ill-health as a misfortune, but as a means appointed by Providence for his improvement in virtue*. The activity and energy of his character, though oppressed by such an affliction, is one of the most astonishing instances of fortitude I ever heard of.

[*Lucy reads.*]

On the morning of Christmas Eve, when Asser was about to return into Wales, the king bestowed upon him two monasteries, with all the riches they contained; a silk pall, very precious; and as much incense as a strong man could carry; adding, that he did not give him these *trifles* as if he was unwilling to give him greater things†. The other learned men who

* Turner, p. 341. † *Ib.* p. 265, *note.*

assisted him in the acquirement of knowledge, were also treated with great respect, and rewarded with princely liberality. But Asser became his confidential friend; and therefore his account of the employments and feelings of Alfred is peculiarly interesting.

It was in the year 887 that Alfred obtained the pleasure of reading Latin, which he had so long desired to enjoy. He and his friend were sitting together in the royal apartments, conversing as usual, when Asser happened to quote a passage. The king was struck with it; and taking his little book from his bosom, desired that it might be written there. Asser found that the book was already too full to receive it; and he proposed putting a few other leaves together, for the purpose of preserving any passages that might please the king. Alfred approved the plan. The new book was made; the quotation was entered, and soon afterwards two more, as they occurred in the conversation. Pleased with the sentiments, the king began to translate them into Saxon. The book was soon filled. The first extracts were from the Scriptures. Others followed, on a variety of subjects. Alfred was delighted with his new talent, and the book became his perpetual companion*.

HARRY.

Really, that is a more entertaining way of

* Turner, *ib.* p. 267.

of learning Latin, than our everlasting grammar and primer. I should like very much to make such a little book for myself. Do you think I could, mamma?

MRS. B.

Certainly; and I think it is a good plan. But do not despise your grammar and primer; for they are very useful helps. Alfred would have been delighted indeed, if a Latin grammar in Saxon had been ready for *his* use.

HARRY.

But my little book, mamma: how would you have me manage it?

MRS. B.

You have learned how to decline nouns, and pronouns, and verbs, in your grammar; and I would advise you to copy one verse from the Latin Testament in your little book, and write the English word which answers to each of the Latin words just under it: then read what you have written very often, till you perfectly know it, and can write it down without looking in your book. This may amuse you, at different times, for two or three days, and then you may copy another verse*.

HARRY.

That sounds like a very easy plan. I should really like to try it!

* See Locke on Education, § 167.

MRS. B.

Pursue it with half the spirit that Alfred did, and you will soon be able to read Latin. If you wish for another royal example, Roger Ascham, who instructed Queen Elizabeth, says, that after learning to decline nouns and verbs, she began to translate and retranslate short passages every day; and thus, in the course of a year or two, she attained the knowledge not only of Latin, but of Greek.

HARRY.

Let me be certain that I understand you. I am to translate a sentence from Latin into English; then, to retranslate it, I must turn it back into Latin. I think I can, and I am resolved to try.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Thus it was that Alfred learned to read Latin. No longer desiring selfish pleasures, he now valued knowledge as the means of doing good; and viewing with compassion the ignorance of his people, was most anxious to share with them the treasures he had discovered. The following is part of a letter which he wrote on this subject to one of his bishops.

"I wondered greatly, that of those good, wise men, who were formerly in our nation, and who had learned all these books, none would translate any part into their own language; but

I soon answered myself, and said, they never thought that men would be so careless, and that learning would be so fallen. They intentionally omitted it, and wished that there should be more wisdom in the land, by many languages being known.

"I then recollected how the law was first found in the Hebrew tongue; and that, after the Greeks had learned it, they translated it all into their own language: and the Latin men, likewise, when they had learned it, they, by wise foreigners, turned it into their tongue; and also every other Christian nation translated some part.

"Therefore, I think it better, if you think so, that we also translate some books, the most necessary for all men to know, into our own language, that we all may be acquainted with them; and we may do this, with God's help, very easy, if we have stillness, so that all the youth who are in England, of freemen, of those who have wealth, be committed to learning, so that they may apply to no other duty till they first well know to read English writing. Let them learn further the Latin language, they who will further learn, and will advance to a higher state*."

* Turner, *ib.* p. 279, &c.

To promote this benevolent design, he established schools in all parts of his kingdom, to which all freemen, possessing two hundred acres of land, were enjoined by law to send their children. He gave preferment only to such as had made some progress in knowledge; and, above all, he set them a most animating example. Engaged as he was in the affairs of government, and in frequent wars, he gained more knowledge, and composed more books than most men who have devoted their lives to study *.

One of the books which he translated was a summary of ancient history, to which he added a sketch of Germany of his own composition; and also an interesting account of two voyages made by his orders, one towards the North Pole, the other in the Baltic †.

Among the other books which Alfred translated, there was one much admired by his subjects. It was written in prison by Boetius, who was disgraced, and put to death by a Gothic

* Hume, p. 97, &c.

† When the captains returned, they gave the king an account of what they had seen. Alfred wrote down the narrative as they related it. In the 2nd vol. of Turner, p. 289, the curious may read what "Othere said to his lord, king Ælfred."

king. This book was intended to show that neither riches, nor power, nor pleasure, nor glory, can make people happy: it described the uses of adversity, and the evils which attend a state of prosperity. The great Creator, who governs the world by his providence, is then declared to be the sovereign good; and the book concludes with an earnest recommendation of the practice of virtue*.

LUCY.

It was very natural for Alfred, who had made such good use of adversity, to be pleased with that book. How I should like to see his translation!

MRS. B.

If you remind me of it to-morrow, I will show you Alfred's translation of some passages of Boetius; but I think they will only interest you as being his. You will scarcely know whether to call them poetry or prose. A few lines of Boetius have, however, been translated into beautiful English verse, and compose the motto to the seventh number of the Rambler. I will repeat them to you, and then you may go to bed:

"O THOU, whose power o'er moving worlds presides,
Whose voice created and whose wisdom guides;
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,
And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 304, &c.

'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast
With silent confidence and holy rest;
From thee, great God! we spring, to thee we tend,
Path, motive, guide, original, and end*."

HARRY.

There was a very strange expression in that letter of Alfred's, which we were reading yesterday. What could he mean by talking of "*free men?*" as if some of the people of England were slaves.

MRS. B.

Many of them *were* slaves in the time of Al-

*Some of our young readers may be amused by comparing the poetry of different ages. The following lines are from the Boetius of Alfred, turned into modern English as literally as possible.

Oh thou Creator
Of the pure stars
Of heaven and earth!
Thou on high seat
Ever reignest.
And thou all the swift
Heaven turnest round:
And thro' thy
Holy might
The stars compellest
That they obey thee

Oh! my Lord,
Thou that all overlookest
Of the world's creatures,
Look now on mankind
With mild eyes;
Now they here, in many
Of the world's waves
Struggle and labour:
Miserable earth-citizens
Pity them now†.

* * *

† Turner, vol. iv. p.p. 380—382.

fred, my dear boy. The happy form of government which now gives freedom to all the inhabitants of this country, has been the work of time—the reward of many struggles and sacrifices. It has gradually improved with the progress of knowledge and virtue; and we trust it will go on improving. This is the nature of the best institutions of man: to attain perfection at once, belongs alone to the Divine Wisdom.

HARRY.

I should very much like to understand these famous laws of England, that I hear every body praise so much; but I suppose it is impossible at my age.

MRS. B.

It is impossible for you to become acquainted with *all* the laws of England, since this would require the labour of many years; but to obtain a general idea of the English Constitution, or form of government, is very possible, and I think would be very entertaining.

HARRY.

Then, dearest mother, do you think you could make it quite plain to me; and especially about the slaves. *English slaves!* that is a strange and hateful expression!

MRS. B.

You have heard that Britain was divided among several different nations, in the early period of

which we have been reading; and among all these people, men of the lowest order were slaves, who, with their wives and children, were the property of their masters. There were various kinds of slaves among the Anglo Saxons. Some were called villeins, because they dwelt at the villages belonging to their masters, whose lands they cultivated; and when the master sold his estate, he sold the slaves with it, just as he did his cattle: in fact, he considered them as part of his live-stock. Others were domestic slaves, and performed various offices about the houses and families of their masters. Some of these practised different arts for the benefit of their owners: indeed, the mechanics of those times were generally in a state of servitude.

LUCY.

Mamma, I had not the least notion of this: I thought that England had always been a free country.

MRS. B.

The introduction of that benevolent religion which "proclaims deliverance to the captive," greatly alleviated the sufferings, and reduced the number of slaves. The bishops had authority to regulate the quantity of work which was to be done by them, and to take care that men treated their slaves as fellow-christians. The bishops and other clergy also set many of their

own slaves at liberty, and recommended others to do so; but the yoke of servitude still, with all these mitigations, continued to be very heavy*.

HARRY.

Indeed I believe it: the kindest master in the world could not make *me* happy if I felt that I was a slave. Slavery is an abominable thing, and quite unnatural for an Englishman.

LUCY.

Will you tell us about the English who were *not* slaves, mamma? and then Harry will listen patiently.

MRS. B.

The next class of people was composed of those who had been slaves, but had either purchased their freedom, or obtained it by some other means. Though these were in reality freemen, they were not considered so honourable as those who had been born free. This distinction between those who obtain freedom, and those who enjoy it by descent from a long race of freemen, still prevails in many parts of Germany; particularly in the districts originally inhabited by the Anglo Saxons†.

LUCY.

Then I suppose that a great love or respect for freedom was part of the character of the

* Henry, *ib.* p. 229, &c. † *Ib.* p. 230.

Anglo Saxons; and that this was the reason why the English laws went on improving, till they allowed every body to be free.

MRS. B.

You are quite right, my dear Lucy. The love of liberty is the active principle of improvement, and the source of all that is great and honourable in national character.

HARRY.

You have not finished your account of Alfred's subjects, mamma: you have not told us any thing of the men who were born free.

MRS. B.

Very true, my dear. These were the third class: they were the descendants of freemen. They were called *ceorls*, and formed a middle class, between the slaves, or those who had acquired freedom, and the nobility. They might go where they pleased, and follow any occupation that was agreeable to their inclination; but so many of them applied to agriculture, that *ceorl* was a common name for a husbandman in the times of the Anglo Saxons. They appear to have generally been a kind of gentlemen farmers; and if any of them acquired the property of five hides of land, upon which he had a church, a kitchen, a bell-house, and great gate, and obtained a seat and office in the king's court, he was considered as a nobleman, or

thane. If a ceorl applied himself to learning and became a priest, he was also considered as a thane. If he preferred commerce, and made three voyages beyond sea, in a ship of his own, and with a cargo belonging to himself, he was then advanced to the dignity of a thane. If he liked none of these pursuits, but chose to be a soldier, he attached himself to some powerful earl, and was called the *huscarle* of such an earl; and if he acquitted himself so well as to obtain from his patron either five hides of land, or a gilt sword, helmet, and breast-plate, as a reward of his valour, he was likewise considered as a thane*.

HARRY.

I think it was better to be a ceorl, than to be born noble, for there is no merit in that; but I should enjoy my thaneship when I had earned it. Will you tell me what you mean by a *hide of land*, mamma? It is a very odd expression.

MRS. B.

It means so much land as can be tilled every year with a single plough. This was reckoned sufficient for the maintenance of one family†. A thane would therefore have property equal to the support of five families.

All above the rank of ceorls, were thanes, or

* Henry, *ib.* p. 231. † Chambers's Dict. *art.* HIDE.

nobles. They were the descendants of the ancient companions of the German princes, and are described by Tacitus, the Roman historian, as being of different ranks, according to the degree of favour they enjoyed with their prince, who esteemed them as his glory, his strength, his ornament in peace, his defence in war. From him they received the feast, the war-horse, and the bloody spear, as the marks of his approbation, and the rewards of their attachment.

The Anglo Saxon princes who founded kingdoms in Britain, were attended by many of these brave companions, or thanes, who contributed greatly to their success. On them the victorious chiefs bestowed portions of the conquered lands, subject to three conditions:—To attend the king with their followers in military expeditions:—to assist in building and defending the royal castles,—and in keeping the bridges and highways in proper repair. Such were the nobles of England in the times of Alfred*.

LUCY.

I think we have now a very clear notion of the different classes of Alfred's subjects. Will

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 232, &c.

you be so kind, mamma, as to tell us how he governed them?

MRS. B.

The story we were reading will give the information you desire. You had better go on from our place. I believe we had just finished the account of Alfred's writings.

[*Lucy reads.*]

We shall be the more surprised at Alfred's industry, in translating these books for the benefit of his subjects, when we reflect, that, like our other Anglo Saxon kings, he was considered as the chief judge in his dominions, and was bound by his coronation oath, to administer justice in person. We are assured by his friend Asser, that he sometimes employed both day and night in hearing causes that were brought before him, by appeals from the sentences of inferior judges. These sentences he frequently reversed, reproving the judges for their ignorance, and commanding them either to apply to the study of the laws, or to resign their offices. If he thought they had passed a wrong sentence from malice, or had been influenced by a bribe, he punished them very severely, and sometimes condemned them to death. To assist our ancient kings in this part of their royal office, they were constantly attended by a number of the wisest and greatest men in the kingdom, who formed a

supreme court of justice, which was called *the king's court, or council**.

HARRY.

I recollect. A seat in the king's court was one of the things you mentioned, as necessary to raise a farmer to the dignity of a thane. I understand this account of the government better than I expected. Go on, Lucy.

[*Lucy reads.*]

With his usual attention to the private convenience of his subjects, Alfred divided his council into three equal parts, and required each part to be on duty only one month at a time.

The other part of the duty of an Anglo Saxon king, consisted in commanding the armies of the state in person, during the time of war. It was by being brave and successful generals, that the founders of the Saxon kingdoms had become kings; and it was long believed improper for any one to be a king who was not a warrior†. Alfred, who was so averse from war that he was only compelled to engage in it by necessity, had his full share of this duty. He is said to have fought fifty-six battles by sea and land. Amidst all these occupations he framed a complete body of laws, which the learned antiquary Spelman

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 253. † *Ib.* p. 254.

supposes to have been the foundation of the common law of the land. These laws were confirmed by the assent of the wisest persons in the kingdom*. This was a necessary sanction; for the Anglo Saxon kings were not aboslute monarchs: their powers were limited by the laws of their country; and they never pretended to impose taxes, or to make laws, without the advice and consent of their *wittena-gemotes*, or assemblies of great and wise men. The kings had the power of summoning these councils, of presiding in them, and of executing the decrees which were passed there†.

LUCY.

This is very much like our king and parliament.

MRS. B.

Yes. Alfred brought this part of the government into so regular a form, that he is in some measure considered as the founder of that part of the English constitution. His great council was like that of his predecessors; but, in the settled part of his reign, it was, by an express law, called together at London, at least twice in the year, for the purpose of governing the nation; and thus it was an image of our present parliaments‡.

* Aikin, *ib.* † Henry, vol. ii. p. 255. ‡ Aikin, *ib.*

[*Lucy reads.*]

Alfred was not only anxious to make good laws, but was careful that, when made, they should be strictly observed. He caused a general survey of his kingdom to be taken: the result of this examination was entered in a book called the "Book of Winchester." From this book, which contained a description of the rivers, mountains, woods, cities, towns, and villages, with an account of the ploughed land, and the number of inhabitants in each district, he divided the whole into a certain number of shires, nearly the same with our present counties. Each shire was again divided into districts; of which some traces are still observed in the *leths* of Kent, and the *rapes* of Sussex*. Each of these districts was again divided into hundreds, and each hundred into tithings†. A tithing consisted of ten neighbouring families: the master of every family was answerable for the behaviour of all who lived in his house; and even for that of his guests, if they staid more than three days with him. The master of one of these ten families was answerable for the conduct of all the other nine, and was a kind of president over them:

* Henry, *ib.* p. 225.

†This division could have been effected by Alfred, only in that part of England which was subject to him.

he was called the tithing-man. These ten families formed a little society; and if one of them was guilty of a crime, all the rest were obliged to assist the tithing-man in bringing the offender to justice. If any dispute occurred which the tithing-man could not settle, or if any of the members had causes of complaint against those of another tithing, the affair was brought before the hundred, which consisted of ten tithings, or a hundred families of freemen. The hundred regularly assembled every month to decide these causes. The person who presided was called the hundreder: he and twelve of the freemen present took an oath that they would administer impartial justice, and then they proceeded to examine the causes *.

LUCY.

This seems very much like our trial by jury: was it a plan of Alfred's, mamma?

MRS. B.

I believe not. Something resembling our trial by jury is said to have been practised by all the northern nations†, and was frequent in England long before the days of Alfred. Neither is he believed to have been the first who divided this country into shires and hundreds, though he made a new and more regular division than had

* Hume, *ib.* p. 92—94. † Millar's Eng. Gov. vol. i. p. 271.

before taken place*. Indeed, I think it is a great proof, not only of the modesty but the wisdom of Alfred, that he preferred reforming and extending the institutions already established, to venturing on new and untried experiments†. Go on, Lucy; I believe the hundred had some other duties to perform.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Besides these monthly meetings, the hundred assembled once in the year, to inquire into crimes, reprove misconduct in magistrates, and oblige every man to show in which tithing he was registered‡. No means could be imagined more likely to produce good order in the country; as every householder had nine persons besides himself, who were answerable for his good behaviour§.

The next superior court to the hundred, was the county-court, which met twice a year, and consisted of the free-holders of the county. From all these courts, those who thought themselves unjustly sentenced, might appeal to the king himself||. This, as we have seen, occupied a great deal of the time of Alfred.

He was, however, rewarded for his trouble, by such success in the administration of govern-

* Henry, p. 225. † Hume, p. 96. ‡ *Ib.* p. 94.

§ Henry, p. 226. || Hume, *ib.* p. 95.

ment, that an end was put to robbery and all acts of violence. The roads were so secure, that money or jewels might have been left upon them, without danger of their being touched by passengers*.

HARRY.

Then my story of the gold bracelets is very likely to be true, after all!

MRS. B.

It is not by any means a probable story, my dear Harry. It is unworthy of the character of Alfred, to suppose that he would place unnecessary temptations in the way of his subjects; and it is inconsistent with the deep sense which he appears to have had of his own frailty. Asser informs us that it was the custom of the king to rise at day-break, and privately repair to some neighbouring church, where, in humble and earnest prayer, he besought Him "from whom all good thoughts and just desires proceed," to strengthen his good intentions†. If he thus distrusted his own virtue, is it likely that he would lay snares for that of the ignorant and unreflecting?

HARRY.

No, mamma: I think he was too just to do

* Aikin, *ib.* † Turner, vol. ii. p. 341.

so; and I will mention that foolish bracelet-story no more.

[*Lucy reads.*]

It might be supposed that this rigid observance of the laws would be oppressive and irksome to the people; but Alfred only desired to restrain the wicked and disorderly, and he ever preserved the most sacred regard to the liberties of his subjects. In his will was found this memorable sentiment: "That it was just the English should for ever remain as free as their own thoughts*."

MRS. B.

Stay a little, my dear Lucy; before we enter on another subject, I will show you, in the map of Sussex, some memorials of Alfred.

Mrs. B. then pointed out, in Speed's map of that county, the six rapes into which it is divided. Harry was very much amused with the sporting dolphins, and then equally diverted with the ships. Look here, mamma, which way does the wind blow? Here they are sailing right before the wind, in opposite directions! Here is a battle, and here is a fleet; and they are putting out boats, as if they were going to land. Oh, I wish you would explain all these things to me!

* Hume, *ib.* p. 96.

Mrs. B. smiled, and said, "You see, maps were differently ornamented in the time of James the First;" and she pointed to the date, 1610. "The fleet," continued she, "is intended to remind those who look at the map, that William the Conqueror landed at Pevensey, in this county; and the battle is a memorial of that which he fought at Hastings. There are also some traces of Alfred *here*," added she, "though not so conspicuous;" and she pointed to the dotted lines which mark the grand divisions of the county.

"Oh! true, the rapes.—Yes. I quite forgot Alfred, mamma; but I will attend now. You are very kind to be so patient with me!"

"I know that the minds of children are apt to wander, and that they are always attracted by novelty. I should be unreasonable to be angry with you for being a child; especially, as it is a thing you cannot very well help."

"But I will show that I can command my attention, though I am a child, if you will be so kind as to go on, mamma."

"I have no more to say about the great divisions of Sussex; we will look a little further."

Mrs. B. then opened "Dallaway's Western Sussex," and showed her children the beautiful map of the rape of Chichester. Lucy said that

she thought there was a great improvement in taste since the days of James the First. Harry was sorry to be reminded of the dolphins, for he had resolved to command his attention; and he said immediately, "You had some particular reason for showing us this map. What was it, dear mamma?"

"You see, this is *one* of the great divisions of the county. I wished you to observe how it is sub-divided into hundreds. Here are still traces of Alfred."

"Yes, mamma," said Lucy; "but I thought Alfred's hundred contained only one hundred families. Now, only look at the hundred of Box and Stockbridge; you see it extends over seven or eight miles, from Fishbourn to Eartham."

MRS. B.

I am glad you discovered this: I was afraid I must have pointed it out to you. England was not nearly so populous in the time of Alfred as at present. However, his hundred families must be understood to be ceorles, or freemen: the inferior classes are not noticed. In the flourishing times of the Roman government, the population of England is supposed to have been double what it was in the period of which we have been reading. From the reign of Alfred to the Norman conquest, it did

not at any time contain above one million and a half of people. Of all the towns built by the Romans, there were only twenty-eight remaining in the seventh century; and the greater part of these contained only a few hundred inhabitants*.

LUCY.

What was the reason that their numbers diminished so much?

MRS. B.

I believe that frequent and destructive wars and famines, were the chief reasons. You have heard of the cruel ravages of the Danes; and, indeed, of the Saxons, on their first arrival. There was also another cause of famine, in the extreme ignorance of the people. I will give you an instance. In the year 678 the people of Sussex suffered so much from this cause, that many perished with hunger, and others threw themselves from the rocks into the sea, in despair. At this time, Wilfred, bishop of York, came amongst them; and seeing their miserable state, he taught them to procure some relief from fishing. For, strange as it may seem, though their coast and rivers abounded with fish, they had not skill enough to catch any thing but a few eels. Wilfred collected all

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 227.

the eel-nets he could procure, and sent his own servants, with some others, out to sea. They caught three hundred fishes, which the good bishop divided equally between his own family, those to whom the nets belonged, and the poor distressed inhabitants. Wilfred quite gained the affection of the people of Sussex, by teaching them this useful art; and they listened more willingly to the preaching of one who had bestowed on them so great a benefit*.

HARRY.

And I think that was very reasonable. It was natural to believe a man who tried to do them good.

LUCY.

Now, my dear mamma, will you explain the most puzzling thing in the whole history of Alfred; and that is, how he could possibly find *time* for all his employments.

MRS. B.

Alfred was an excellent economist. He was very careful in the distribution of his revenue: every part of it was exactly appropriated to the purpose intended. He was equally careful of his most precious treasure.

HARRY.

Do you mean his *time*, mamma?

*Henry, vol. ii. p. 381.

MRS. B.

Yes, my love, time *is* our most precious treasure, since, on its right employment depend our usefulness and honour in this world, and our everlasting happiness in the next.

To make the most of time, it is necessary to arrange it wisely. Alfred resolved to divide his day and night into three equal parts. He gave eight hours to rest and refreshment, eight to the affairs of his kingdom, and eight to those duties which he regarded as sacred. But clocks and watches were conveniences then unknown in England. How do you think he contrived to supply the want of them?

HARRY.

I think it was by an hour-glass.

MRS. B.

You forget that he must have some means of calculating the lapse of an hour, before he could make an hour-glass.

LUCY.

Perhaps it was a sun-dial. But no, *that* would be of no use in the night, or when it was cloudy. Will you be so kind as to tell us what it was, mamma?

MRS. B.

Willingly. He caused a certain weight of wax to be made into six candles, each of them twelve inches long: the inches were marked on

the candles. These, lighted in succession, lasted through the whole twenty-four hours. How many minutes would one inch of those candles last?

LUCY.

There are four sixes in twenty-four; so each candle would last four hours: half a candle, or six inches, two hours: three inches, one hour: one inch, one third of an hour; that is, twenty minutes.

HARRY.

And then half an inch would be ten minutes; and a quarter of an inch, five minutes. Why, Alfred's wax-clock was a capital invention!

MRS. B.

One great inconvenience belonged to it. The wind rushing in through the doors and windows, and the numerous chinks of the walls, or the loose covering of the tents, prevented the candles from burning equally, and quite confounded Alfred's calculations*.

HARRY.

Chinks in the walls of his palace! I am afraid it was but a rough sort of dwelling, and I dare say the candles flared and guttered strangely. How did he conquer this difficulty?

* Turner, *ib.* p. 337.

MRS. B.

His friend Asser tells us, that the king bestowed a great deal of thought upon it. He had observed the transparency of white horn, and availed himself of that property. A wooden frame was made, and filled with thin pieces of horn, and the important candle was safely lodged in a *horn lantern;* thus, he obtained what he wanted, an exact measure of time*.

HARRY.

Mamma, I shall feel pleasure in looking at a horn-lantern as long as I live. May I tell Robert this, and then he can think of Alfred while he is littering up his horses?

MRS. B.

He would not feel any particular pleasure in thinking of Alfred, because he has no previous knowledge of him.

HARRY.

That is a pity! for knowledge is pleasure, as well as power; and that I find every day. Go on, if you please, Lucy: let us hear the rest of the story.

[*Lucy reads.*]

We have not yet spoken of Alfred's character as a father. He was as anxious for the improvement of his children, as he was for his own.

* Turner, *ib.*

Two sons and three daughters survived him. They were accustomed to behave with dutiful affection to their parents, and with mildness and affability to each other. They were instructed in the knowledge which could then be obtained: they learned hymns of devotion, and carefully studied books written in their own language, especially Saxon poetry; and they were accustomed to frequent reading. Alfred enjoyed the happiness of seeing himself surrounded by dutiful, affectionate, and intelligent children. Ethelfleda, his eldest daughter, was a woman of a very superior mind. She is extolled in the ancient chronicles, as the wisest lady in England*. Edward, who succeeded his father, was, like him, happy in his children, and, like him, harassed by the incursions of the Danes who were settled in England, and by the piratical invasions of others from abroad. His vigilance and activity repelled these attacks, before they had done much mischief. In all his exertions for the security of his dominions, Edward was greatly assisted by his heroic sister Ethelfleda, the widow of Ethelred, governor of Mercia. This princess seems to have inherited more of her father's character, than any other of his children. She governed Mercia for eight years

* Turner, *ib.* p. 327—329.

after the death of her husband; commanded armies, gained victories, built cities, and performed actions which would have done honour to the greatest princes*. Thus, having slightly noticed the two most distinguished of Alfred's children, we return to that great monarch, who, still in the vigour of his faculties, felt his end approaching. Some of his last instructions to his son and successor have been preserved. As describing the feelings of a father and a king, they deserve to be remembered; and with them we will conclude this faint sketch of one of the best and greatest princes that ever lived.

"My dear son, sit thee now beside me, and I will deliver thee true instructions. My son, I feel that my hour is coming. My countenance is wan. My days are almost done. We must now part. I shall to another world, and thou shalt be left alone in all my wealth. I pray thee, (for thou art my dear child,) strive to be a father and a lord to thy people. Be thou the children's father, and the widow's friend. Comfort thou the poor, and shelter the weak; and with all thy might, right that which is wrong. And, son, govern thyself by law, then shall the Lord love thee, and God above all things shall be thy reward. Call thou upon him to advise

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 67.

thee in all thy need, and so shall he help thee, the better to compass that which thou wouldst*.

HARRY.

I am sorry the story is ended! I have often heard of Alfred the Great; but I shall call him Alfred the Good.

MRS. B.

An author who lived in the time of William the Conqueror, had occasion to mention some of the preceding kings, whom he distinguished by short and appropriate epithets. He designated our favourite hero by the expressive appellation of, "Alfred the truth-teller†."

HARRY.

Oh, that is best of all! Yes, that shall be it; and I think I shall never forget the story of "Alfred the truth-teller!"

*Turner, *ib.* p. 330. †*Ib.* p. 344.

HAROLD.

O'er him whose doom thy virtues grieve,
Aërial forms shall sit at eve,
And bend the pensive head!
And, fall'n to save his injur'd land,
Imperial Honour's awful hand
Shall point his lonely bed!

COLLINS.

LUCY.

CAN you tell us, dear mamma, whether the Anglo Saxons continued to improve after the death of Alfred?

MRS. B.

It appears from history that they did not. Indeed, the story of Alfred is a proof, that lasting improvement can be expected to take place only in those minds which are sensible of the importance of knowledge. Alfred regarded it as the means of civilization and virtue. His authority, as well as his example, was employed to secure the advantages of education to his subjects; but they were not prepared to receive these impressions, and when the influence of

their enlightened monarch was no longer felt, they relapsed into barbarism*.

HARRY.

Then all the care and pains of that glorious Alfred were quite thrown away!

MRS. B.

By no means, my dear Harry. The labours of Alfred were not lost, though the fruit of them could not immediately appear. The remembrance of what he had done—of what he had shown that it was possible to do, remained for the guidance and encouragement of those, who in happier times might attempt the work of reformation. We find many examples of this kind in history, and when the progress of knowledge has corrected crimes and abuses that once generally prevailed, we look back with gratitude and veneration to those enlightened patriots, those *true heroes*, who in dark and distant ages rose superior to the prejudices of their countrymen, and acted on principles then unknown or disregarded. The noble exertions of Alfred have indeed made so powerful an impression on after times, that it has been common to ascribe to him the origin of such particulars in the English government, as have excited uncommon attention, and which have existed so long that

*Robertson's Charles 5th, vol. i. p. 23.

their beginning cannot be distinctly traced. We have seen how little Alfred turned his thoughts to new inventions, while he applied all the powers of his mind to improve and perfect those which had already been tried and found useful; yet he has been considered by many as the English Lycurgus, the inventer and founder of an entirely new system*.

LUCY.

I think it is no compliment to Alfred, to compare him with Lycurgus. You know the Spartans were left behind all the other Greeks, both in arts and in knowledge, because Lycurgus would not permit them to learn from strangers†. Now Alfred took a great deal of pains to make his subjects acquainted with the wisdom of other nations. I think he was much more generous, and not nearly so proud.

HARRY.

You forget what is of very great consequence, Lucy. Alfred wished only to hinder his people from doing wrong; but at Sparta a man could not eat his dinner at home without getting into disgrace. Alfred said, that "it was just that the English should always be as free as their

*Millar's Eng. Government, vol. i. p. 271.
†Grecian Stories, p. 88.

own thoughts;" but Lycurgus made his people slaves.

LUCY.

Did the descendants of Alfred continue to reign in England till the Norman conquest?

MRS. B.

No: a remarkable instance of perfidy and cruelty produced a change in the government. The immediate successors of Alfred were brave princes, who, if they did not carry forward the wise improvements which their ancestor had begun, at least exerted themselves successfully to defend their country from the invasions of the Danes. One of their plans of defence was very singular. Observing that the Danes who were settled in England retained their ancient ferocity, and excelled their own subjects in military courage, these Saxon princes kept a great number of them in their pay, as a regular body of troops, to be at all times ready for service.

The Danes were by this means possessed of the power and influence of a standing army; and, unrestrained by the influence of civilized manners, they were guilty of many excesses, and rendered themselves very odious to the Saxons. Ethelred, a weak and cowardly prince, who reigned about one hundred years after Alfred, desired to rid himself of these

troublesome soldiers: the means he chose will ever disgrace his memory. He issued secret orders for a general massacre of those unfortunate men. It was directed to take place every where on an appointed Sunday; the day on which the Danes usually bathed, and when, of course, they were unarmed, and less capable of defending themselves*.

HARRY.

You said that Ethelred was cowardly, mamma; and you see that cowardice and cruelty go together: a brave man would not have been guilty of such an action.

MRS. B.

I believe you will soon become acquainted with the character of a very brave man, who was guilty of cruelties quite as shocking. But at present we will speak only of Ethelred, whose orders were too faithfully executed; and never did barbarous policy prove more fatal to those who practised it. Sweyn, king of Denmark, revenged this act of perfidious cruelty by invading England. Many towns were pillaged and burnt, and great part of the country laid waste; while general consternation and distrust prevented the English from adopting measures of defence. At length, the cruel and ill-judging

* Millar, *ib.* p. 272; and Hume, *ib.* p. 140.

Ethelred, equally afraid of the violence of the enemy, and of the treachery of his own subjects, fled for shelter to the court of his brother-in-law, Richard duke of Normandy*.

HARRY.

I am never sorry for cruel people; for whatever they suffer, I think they richly deserve it. But what became of the English after their king deserted them?

MRS. B.

Sweyn did not live to complete his designs against England; but his son Canute, who succeeded him in his throne and in his projects, was more fortunate, and in a short time added England to the dominions which he inherited from his father.

HARRY.

Was that the same Canute of whom we have read in "Evenings at Home?"

MRS. B.

Yes, Harry. It gives me pleasure to see you endeavour to connect a new idea with something which you knew before. This is the way to remember.

LUCY.

The Canute of "Evenings at Home" is

* Hume, *ii.* p. 141—144.

represented as a wise king, who hated flattery. Is that a just description of him, mamma?

MRS. B.

Canute was a prince of great abilities, and after his authority was acknowledged by the English, he entirely gained their affection by the impartial justice of his government. He made no distinction between his Danish and English subjects, and allowed every county inhabited by the latter, to be governed by its ancient laws, as in the time of the Saxon kings*. I believe it must be acknowledged that this apparent regard for justice was a measure of policy, and not the effect of virtuous dispositions. Canute was a very ambitious man, and feeling jealous of the affection of the English for the young princes of the Saxon royal family, he deliberately resolved to have them murdered. This was a plan he durst not execute in England, and, under pretence of allowing them to travel, he sent one of his servants with them to Denmark, where this cruel design could be secretly accomplished. The person to whom they were intrusted, was touched with compassion for the poor boys, and carried them to the king of Sweden, to whom he revealed his master's intention.

* Rapin, vol. i. p. 143.

The Swedish monarch received them kindly, but to prevent any disagreement between himself and Canute, he sent them to the court of Solomon, king of Hungary, who undertook the care of their education*.

HARRY.

I am very glad that the young princes escaped from his power; but I think Canute was as much to blame as if he had really killed them. Do you know what became of the English princes, mamma?

MRS. B.

Yes: they both married in Hungary, and the elder died there. The younger returned to England with his son and two daughters: this was many years after the death of Canute, when the crown was restored to the Saxon family†.

LUCY.

I am very glad that our own princes reigned again, for I did not like the thought of an ambitious Dane seizing England, and governing it like a province of Denmark.

HARRY.

I believe an ambitious Dane could not very easily do the same thing now; and it is strange that the English should have submitted so quietly to Canute. Can you explain it, mamma?

* Rapin, *ib.* p. 149. † Hume, p. 169.

MRS. B.

Perhaps I may, at least in part. But I wish first to correct a mistake which Lucy seems to be making. Neither prince Edward, nor the children he brought from Hungary, succeeded to the throne. His uncle, Edward the Confessor, who invited him to return to England, was the last of the Anglo Saxon kings. A few months after his death, England again became an easy prey to a foreigner.

HARRY.

I cannot bear this, mamma. How strange, for England to be conquered by one foreigner after another! Now you have set Lucy right, I wish you would be so very kind as to explain it.

MRS. B.

It appears, from the melancholy history of those times, that when the barbarous nations of Europe embraced Christianity, the difference in their religion was principally in name. They changed the object, but not the spirit of their worship*. And as the ancient pagans had enriched the temples of Ephesus and of Delphi with magnificent offerings, these ignorant Christians endeavoured to gain the favour of the true God by similar presents. This was very agreeable to

* Robertson, *ib.* p. 22.

the clergy, who appear to have been at that time as little acquainted with the real duties of religion as the common people; but they very well understood how to make it a pretence for the acquisition of wealth and power*. In the early part of the eleventh century, the superstitious English made such frequent pilgrimages to Rome, that the roads swarmed with them; and the tolls which they paid were an important addition to the revenue of those princes through whose territories they passed. Indeed, very few Englishmen thought that St. Peter, who, they imagined, kept the keys of heaven, would admit them into that happy abode, unless they had paid him the compliment of going to Rome, where, you know, that Apostle is said to have suffered martyrdom†.

HARRY.

Why that was making Peter of more consequence than Jesus himself! I remember you showed me, a great while ago, what he said about worshipping at Jerusalem‡, and that was the place where he suffered. I wonder that the English did not think of this.

MRS. B.

If the English of those days had possessed the

*Robertson, p. 283. †Henry, vol. 2. p. 210.
‡See Winter Evenings, vol. i. p. 123

New Testament in their own language, and could have read it whenever they pleased, as we may, it would not have been in the power of the pope and the clergy to impose such foolish superstitions upon them.

The Scriptures being then in a dead language, and scarcely any but the clergy capable of reading them, they were at liberty to interpret the Bible as they pleased. They also carried on a very profitable trade with the pilgrims who resorted to Rome; a trade of which, I believe, you have no notion.

LUCY.

Pray tell us what it was, mamma!

MRS. B.

It was the sale of *relics*, or remains of things, to which the folly of that age attached a superstitious value. You would not have imagined that the cross on which our Saviour was crucified, was, in consequence of having been used for that purpose, possessed of properties different from other wood. Yet the pope and Romish clergy pretended that it was endowed with extraordinary virtues; and they sold little fragments of wood, which they imposed on the credulous multitude as having been parts of that very cross. Besides this, they carried on a great trade in the legs and arms of Apostles, which were purchased by kings, princes, and

wealthy priests: while persons of smaller fortune were obliged to be contented with the toes and fingers of saints of less consequence *.

HARRY.

The legs and arms of the Apostles must have been very soon disposed of, since there were only twelve of them. But, mamma, in a thousand years there could be nothing left but the disjointed bones, and I think even those must have crumbled away. I cannot imagine how men could be so stupid as to believe it!

MRS. B.

If you had lived in the eleventh century, you would, in all probability, have been equally stupid.

HARRY.

Then I am very glad that I did not. But, mamma, I do not see why this foolish superstition should have hindered the English from defending themselves against their enemies?

MRS. B.

I will tell you why. The clergy pretended that making rich presents to them, and building and adorning monasteries, was the way to obtain everlasting happiness; and such was the mad profusion of the English, that great part of the wealth of the nation was spent in this manner.

* Henry, *ib.* p. 210.

Frequent and extravagant grants of land were bestowed upon the church from the beginning of the tenth to the middle of the eleventh century; that is, from the death of Alfred to that of Edward the Confessor, when there is good reason to believe, that more than one third of all the lands in England were in possession of the clergy, exempt from taxes, and generally from any obligation to contribute to the defence of the kingdom. This must necessarily have lessened the power of the English to resist any invader. There was also another cause of weakness, in the destructive wars which were carried on between the Danes and English, particularly in the first seventeen years of the eleventh century, when the Saxon Chronicle presents such a sad story of slaughter and devastation, that it seems surprising the English were not quite destroyed, and their country reduced to a perfect desert*. When we consider these circumstances, we cannot wonder that our ancestors should have been so cruelly insulted by the Danes, and so easily conquered by the Normans.

HARRY.

I understand it now, but I am very sorry for it: I cannot bear England to be conquered! And what right had William of Normandy to come here?

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 211 and 365.

MRS. B.

None in the world: his doing so was a direct violation of the rights of the English*, who had chosen a countryman of their own to fill the vacant throne.

LUCY.

Why did they not choose prince Edward, after inviting him and his family from Hungary?

MRS. B.

They did choose him. He was, with the consent of the nation, declared by Edward the Confessor heir to the crown; but Providence had otherwise determined. Edward died very soon after his return to England, leaving his son Edgar, and two infant daughters, to the care of his uncle, who brought them up in the English court with great kindness, and seems to have intended that the young Edgar should succeed him, for he gave him the title of Atheling.

HARRY.

What does *Atheling* mean, mamma?

MRS. B.

Among the Anglo Saxons, the eldest son of the reigning prince, or the heir to the throne, was called the *Ætheling*, or the Most Noble, and was the next person in dignity after the king

*Lyttelton's Henry the Second, vol. i. p. 12.

and queen*. Edgar Atheling was, however, so young when his uncle died, that he was not thought capable of taking the government; and the Wittena-gemote, or great council of the nation, set him aside, and elected Harold, who had conducted the public affairs with great honour and ability during the latter years of Edward the Confessor; making the reign of that weak prince a happy period to the English†. He successfully repelled the incursions of the Welsh, and reduced them to obedience‡. Another incident does him still greater honour. Tosti, the brother of Harold, a man given up to the worst passions, was appointed earl of Northumberland, and by his cruel oppressions he so greatly irritated the people who lived under his government, that they rose in arms, and drove Tosti out of their country. When king Edward heard of this, he sent Harold to subdue the rebels: he went accordingly, and was thus addressed by the Northumbrians:

"*We were born and bred freemen, and cannot endure a tyrannical governor; but have learned from our ancestors to secure to ourselves either liberty or death.*"

This bold assertion of their rights would have been considered an unpardonable offence by a tyrannical man; but Harold respected the feel-

*Henry, *ib.* p. 235. †Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 4, 5.
‡Hume, p. 176.

ings of these brave Englishmen, and exerting his influence with the king, prevailed on him to let them have, instead of his wicked brother, Morcar, the brother of Edwin, earl of Mercia, the person of their own choice, to govern them; though it happened that the father and grandfather of that young nobleman had been dangerous enemies to the father of Harold, and to himself. By this disinterested conduct he gained both the friendship of two powerful nobles, who never forgot the obligation, and the hearts of the people whom he had so essentially served*.

HARRY.

He deserved it, mamma; and he deserved to rule a free people! I think the Wittena-gemote made a very wise choice.

LUCY.

But I think that way of electing kings makes a great deal of confusion. Have you forgotten what mamma read to us about the Poles and Sobieski?

HARRY.

Oh, no! The Poles once chose a foolish young man by mistake; and sometimes, when several people were proposed, they all went to fighting†. That was a bad way, certainly; but all *that* happened in Poland. I still think that our

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 20. † See Palmer's Life of Sobieski.

Wittena-gemote made a wise choice. What do you say, mamma?

MRS. B.

I think that Harold was every way deserving of the honour conferred upon him; but that the English would have acted more prudently if they had given the crown to Edgar, who was the rightful heir, and appointed Harold to govern the nation, and instruct the young monarch in the discharge of his important duties, till he was capable of directing his own conduct. This expedient does not seem to have been thought of, though they would by that arrangement have avoided another difficulty. William had no right to interfere with the English in their choice of a king, but he had some ground of complaint against Harold. The case was this. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, Harold happened to be at sea, on a party of pleasure: he was surprised by a storm, and thrown upon the territories of the earl of Ponthieu, who inhospitably seized him as a prisoner, in hopes of obtaining a great sum for his ransom. In this distress Harold applied to the duke of Normandy, who obtained his release, and received him as his guest, with great professions of friendship. But Harold still felt that he was in a state of captivity; and being anxious to obtain his liberty at any rate, and at the

same time strongly urged by the duke, he took an oath to assist him in his design of succeeding Edward the Confessor in the English throne.

LUCY.

Then I think he ought not to have accepted of the crown, even when it was offered to him.

MRS. B.

Harold pleaded in his own behalf, that his oath was not voluntary, and therefore not binding. And, certainly, whatever restraint it should have been to his own ambition, it ought not to have controlled the choice of the nation; since Harold could have no right to take upon himself the disposal of the crown to a foreign prince; and therefore the attempt of the duke of Normandy was still a violation of the rights of the English, who, being aware of his designs, and very much afraid of subjection to the government of a foreigner, desired, in such a moment of danger, to commit the defence of the kingdom to a prince whose courage and wisdom had been fully proved*. It was more necessary to do this, because the Anglo Saxons expected their king to command his army in person†.

HARRY.

Then they must have altered that law before

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 10—12. † Henry, p. 254.

they could choose young Edgar. I still think they acted rightly; for I have often heard you say, that while a law exists it ought to be obeyed, and you know that Socrates was of that opinion*.

MRS. B.

I am not sure whether the conduct of the Saxon kings on that occasion was regulated by an express law, or whether they only conformed to established custom. I think we have now employed a good deal of time in considering the state of England under the Saxon government: should you like to know what changes were introduced by William the Conqueror?

HARRY.

I wish you would not leave Harold just yet, dear mother: I want to be better acquainted with him. We know that he was brave and generous, but what was he besides?

MRS. B.

There was much dignity, gracefulness, and strength in his person. He had a courage and resolution which nothing could daunt; an easy flow of natural eloquence, animated by a lively, agreeable wit; and elevation of sentiment, with popular manners. In the arts of government, and in military talents, he had no equal among

* Grecian Stories, p. 384.

his own countrymen; and his character was rendered more amiable by a generous spirit, and a heart in which humanity tempered ambition. It does not appear that his virtues were disgraced by the mixture of any vice or weakness which could dishonour him in the eyes of the people; and the high opinion they entertained of him, was justified by his conduct during the short time that he filled the English throne*.

HARRY.

I am very sorry that his reign was so short. Such a king as that, at the head of an army of brave Englishmen, might soon have driven William back again to Normandy.

MRS. B.

It appears very surprising, that William the Conqueror should, by one single battle, become master of a country which the Romans could not entirely subdue in four hundred years, and to obtain which the Danes and Saxons struggled so long in vain. Such events as the Norman conquest compel us to acknowledge, that "the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will†." The circumstances of this affair are so remarkable, that I will relate them to you.

Tosti, the profligate brother of Harold, had

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 5. † Rapin, p. 194.

never forgiven him for taking the part of the oppressed Northumbrians; and when he saw him raised to the throne, he was excited by envy, as well as by resentment, to offer his services to the duke of Normandy. He made some attempts on the southern coasts, and then repaired to the banks of the Humber, where his ravages were checked by earl Edwin, and by Morcar, the young nobleman who had succeeded him in the government of Northumbria. Tosti was obliged to retire to his ships, and to seek shelter in Scotland. After some months he returned to invade his country once more; not in conjunction with William, but with another foreign prince, whom he appears to have met accidentally at sea. Equally desperate in mind as in fortune, it was of little consequence to Tosti by what means he obtained the revenge he so earnestly desired; and, regardless of his former engagements to the duke of Normandy, he now joined the king of Norway, who, with a numerous fleet, and formidable army of veteran soldiers, entered the mouth of the Humber.

Harold did not expect this attack. After Tosti was driven out of the Humber, the English fleet and army had been constantly stationed to guard the coast opposite to Normandy, the only quarter from which danger was now apprehended. The northern coasts were therefore

left quite open and defenceless; and the king of Norway and Tosti, finding nothing to obstruct their progress, advanced as far as York. When Harold heard of this invasion, he instantly ordered his fleet to sail to the Humber, and marched himself, with his whole army, against the Norwegians. It seems strange that he should leave the southern coast quite unprotected; but it is said that he received false intelligence, to which he gave credit, that William intended to defer his enterprise to another year.

Harold came up with the Norwegians on the 25th of September, and found them strongly posted near Stamford Bridge: they fought with fierce and obstinate valour; but at length the English, who were greatly superior in numbers, prevailed. The king of Norway and Tosti were both killed in the battle, and their fleet and army nearly destroyed. Twenty ships were spared, which the generous Harold permitted to return to their own country with Olaus, the son of the dead king.

The duke of Normandy knew nothing of what had happened in the north of England. His fleet had been ready to sail for a month, but was detained by contrary winds or calms. At length a favourable breeze sprung up, and three days after the battle of Stamford Bridge,

William sailed from the harbour of St. Vallori, at the mouth of the river Somme, and landed the next day at Pevensey in Sussex, without meeting any resistance. Nothing could have happened more favourable to his enterprise, than the unexpected invasion of the Norwegians; for Harold's fleet being on that account sent to the Humber, William not only escaped the danger of a sea-fight, in which he might probably have been defeated, but the great difficulties which he must have encountered, if he had found the whole army of Harold on the coast of Sussex, ready to oppose his landing*.

LUCY.

Indeed, it does seem as if Providence had removed all difficulties out of the way, on purpose that the duke of Normandy might succeed. And how *very* remarkable it was, that two powerful princes, unknown to each other, should invade, just at the same time, a country with which neither of them was at war!

HARRY.

We know what was the consequence to poor Harold; but I should like to hear what he did, when the news of the Norman invasion reached him.

MRS. B.

Harold was at York with his army, celebrat-

* Lyttelton, p. 21—26.

ing the victory he had just gained over the king of Norway, when he heard that William had landed. I told you that he was a man of undaunted courage, and on this trying occasion it did not fail: he put an end to his rejoicings, and set out for London. When he arrived there, he found his army much weakened, by the loss he had sustained in the battle of Stamford Bridge; and by a great desertion, which had taken place in consequence of the discontent the soldiers felt at not being allowed their expected share of the booty *.

LUCY.

Was it not foolish of Harold to displease the soldiers, when he had such great need of their help?

MRS. B.

It was impolitic, certainly; but I believe his motive was good. He probably intended to reserve the spoils he had just taken, to defray the extraordinary expences of his present circumstances, instead of imposing fresh taxes on his people. At least, this is more consistent with the known generosity of his temper, than to suppose he was prompted by avarice to deprive his soldiers of their just share of the plunder†.

The wisest counsellors of Harold, and also

* Henry, vol. iii. p. 2. † Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 26.

his brother Gurth, advised him to remain at London till he had refreshed and recruited his army *. Yet, such was his fatal presumption, that he would not wait for the militia of several counties, which were marching to join him; but, having taken a few recruits in passing through London, he hurried forward, before half of the forces he expected were arrived, as if it had been his business to attack, instead of to defend †.

HARRY.

Ah! *he* had never read the story of Fabius, that is plain. But I think he might have known how Alfred had managed with Hastings.

MRS. B.

We cannot exactly tell what were the motives of Harold, but, on this occasion, his usual wisdom seems to have forsaken him; and it is certain that he appeared too rash and impatient, even to those who marched under his command. I think it was said by some wise man of antiquity, that, "Whom the gods decree to perish, they first deprive of understanding." We, who are blessed with clearer views of the Divine government, may frequently observe the truth of this remark; but as you yet know very little of history, I will mention one striking instance,

* Henry, vol. iii. p. 2. † Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 27.

so recent as to be frequently the subject of conversation. It was this fatal presumption which led Buonaparte to encounter the horrors of a Russian winter, and occasioned the downfall of his power.

HARRY.

Oh, thank you for that instance, mamma! I have heard Buonaparte and Moscow talked of again and again; and I have read what the French suffered in their retreat. I do like these comparisons! Alfred and Fabius, Harold and Buonaparte. I will listen to people when they are talking about what is in the news-papers, and try to find something like it in history. I am very glad, mother, that you have taught me to like *real* stories!

MRS. B.

I believe it is natural to like them, Harry, unless our taste is spoiled by idle, foolish reading. I quite approve your plan of comparisons, and believe you will generally find that rashness and presumption are the causes of misfortune; while steady courage, restrained by prudence, is the means of success. Let us now compare the conduct of the duke of Normandy with that of Harold. Though, at his landing, he found no army to oppose him, he would not advance any further; but employed his troops in raising forts at Pevensey and Hastings, to

protect his ships, and secure the means of retreat, should he be unsuccessful.

In the meantime, Harold, as he marched towards Hastings, was met by a monk, who came with a proposal from the duke, to determine their cause, either by the judgment of the pope, or by single combat, in the sight of both their armies. Harold replied, that he was advancing to fight a battle, in which God would judge between him and his adversary. Perhaps, by this proposal, William intended to show, that he did not desire to make war on the English nation, but only to settle his own private quarrel with the king. However, he set fire to some villages in the neighbourhood of his camp; which, by irritating Harold, had the effect he desired, and helped to push on that valiant prince to his fate *.

LUCY.

Ah, poor Harold! he trusted in the justice of his cause, and the protection of Providence, and he was disappointed. Such things seem very strange!

MRS. B.

They would be strange, my dear Lucy, did we not know, that what we call evil would not be permitted, unless it was the means of pro-

* Lyttelton, *ib.*

ducing greater good. As for Harold, he was probably much happier in dying for his country, than he would have been, had he lived under the harsh sway of the conqueror. And for England, which till then had been almost unknown to the rest of Europe, this revolution, by producing an intimate union with the most civilized part of it, was the first step which led to her present greatness *. Neither was the overthrow of the Saxon government much to be regretted, since it was not well calculated to secure the liberty and natural rights of men; the lower orders being, as we have seen, either slaves, or tenants, at the will of their masters †. Tyranny, cruelty, and oppression of their inferiors, were the prevailing vices of the great and powerful, among the Danes and Anglo Saxons; particularly in the reigns of the later kings, when poor men and their families were often seized by force, and sold for slaves. Some of Harold's brothers were guilty of the most shameful actions. When they saw any country-seat that pleased their fancy, they gave directions to their followers to murder the owner and all his family, in the night, and then obtained a grant of the house and estate for themselves. Yet these men were judges, and rulers of the land ‡.

* Rapin, p. 195. † Millar, vol. i. p. 376.

‡ Henry, vol. ii. p. 555.

LUCY.

I suppose it was such behaviour as that, which the Northumbrians would not endure; and so they drove out Tosti.

MRS. B.

How wretched must be that government, under which rebellion is the only means of obtaining justice!

HARRY.

Well, if the Saxons were in such a bad state, there is less reason to be sorry that they were conquered. And now, mamma, will you be so kind as to give us a very clear account of the battle by which William of Normandy gained the English crown?

MRS. B.

I think battles afford such a melancholy view of human nature, that I am not fond of charging my memory with the detail of them; but if you have much curiosity respecting this particular one, I believe I can find you an account of it, which you are quite capable of understanding.

Mrs. B. then took down from the book-case the first volume of "Lord Lyttelton's History of King Henry the Second," which contains an account of the revolutions of England, from Edward the Confessor to Henry the Second.

She turned to page 29, and desired Harry to read the following account of

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

"The two armies were now encamped very near to each other, and prepared to fight the next morning, but in a very different manner. The English passed the night in drinking and revelling, the Normans in acts of devotion. At break of day the duke himself heard mass in public, and received the communion. While he was arming, it happened that his breast-plate was put on turned upside down, which some about him considering as a bad omen, he changed it into a good one, by saying, with a smile, "It signified only that the strength of his dukedom should on that day be converted into the strength of a kingdom." He then hung about his neck some relics of saints, on which Harold had sworn to assist him; and lastly, he ordered a consecrated banner, which he had received from the pope, to be carried before his army. Having thus ably made use of all the help he could draw from religion or superstition, to encourage his men, he advanced against Harold, who had performed all the offices of a skilful commander in the disposition of his forces, and

in the choice of his ground. Being greatly inferior in numbers, and not having a cavalry able to engage with that of the Normans, which made five parts in six of their army, he took post on a hill, and commanding all the horsemen he had to dismount, formed his whole army into one deep phalanx of heavy-armed foot. The royal standard of England was fixed upon the spot where Battle Abbey is built; and near to that stood the king, with Gurth and Leofrin, his two brothers. Towards the enemy the descent of the ground was steep; but the top was level, and wide enough to contain all his men, in the close and compact order into which he put them, with their shields so joined together as not to leave any interval or opening between them. Behind the phalanx were woods, through which they had marched to that post, and which defended their rear, extending themselves likewise so far upon the sides of the hill, as to prevent their being flanked. They were all armed with Danish battleaxes, and had also javelins, or darts: but they did not make use in this fight, either of long or cross bows, both which weapons were employed with great skill by the Normans. The duke of Normandy began the attack by his archers, sustained by heavy-armed foot; but a shower of darts falling on them, and great stones, which the English had prepared for that

purpose, being thrown down on their heads, from high scaffolds of wood, as they ascended the hill, William saw it was necessary to bring up his cavalry, in which his principal strength consisted. Advancing, therefore, with these divided into five bodies, he placed the infantry in his wings, and gained the brow of the hill, where the English phalanx was stationed. Both armies now fought hand to hand: the Normans and French with their swords, the English with their axes. After a long and sharp conflict, the Bretons, and all the other auxiliary forces, both horse and foot, that were posted in the left wing of the enemy, fled. At the same instant, a rumour being spread through the line that William was slain, the whole army of that prince fell into disorder; but as soon as he understood from what cause it proceeded, he took off his helmet, and riding among them bare-headed, by his presence and words dispelled their fear. When they had recovered their ranks, he commanded them to surround some thousands of the English, whom the flight of his left wing, and the confusion they had seen in his whole line of battle, had tempted out to some distance from the body of their phalanx. These were all cut in pieces; and the duke, having rallied his auxiliary forces, led them back, to assault

the main body of the enemy, which remained on the hill, disposing his cavalry and heavy-armed foot as before; but commanding his archers, who were placed behind his wings, to shoot their arrows very high up into the air, that they might fall perpendicularly upon the heads of the English. As the files of these were so deep, and pressed together so closely, this annoyed them very much; and the Norman horse, pressing forwards, assaulted their front with great fury. Yet, such was the impenetrable firmness of the order in which they were drawn up, that all attempts to break them failed, till the duke, who observed the discouragement of his troops, had recourse to a stratagem, which what had happened before might naturally suggest. He instructed his men to feign a flight; and many of the English believing it real, pursued them again to the plain, where they turned on a sudden, and surrounding these disordered bands with their cavalry, killed them all, to a man. We are told, by an author who was in the camp of the Normans, that the same artifice was repeated by the duke once more, and with equal success. If this be not a mistake, we must conclude from it, that Harold was very incautious, to be drawn into the same snare a second time, or rather a third; (for though the first flight of the enemy was not a feigned one,

yet the pursuit had been equally fatal to the English;) or, if the fault was not in him, but arose from an eagerness which he could not restrain, it proves that his discipline was much inferior to that of the duke. His remaining himself the whole time upon the summit of the hill, together with his two brothers, makes it most probable that he was aware of the danger, and would have prevented his soldiers from being deceived by this feint, if it had been in his power. The loss he sustained by it was grievous. His forces, which the enemy had much outnumbered before, were now extremely diminished; yet the remainder of them kept their ranks unbroken, animated by the presence and example of their king, who fought on foot the whole day, and slew many of the Normans with his own hand. Nor did the duke of Normandy expose himself less to all danger, but had three horses killed under him in the course of the action. His soldiers, incited by the courage of their leader, fatigued the English with frequent pertinacious attacks, and galled them with continual showers of arrows; all which they sustained with an invincible patience, fixed immovably to the spot whereon they were posted. Nor yet could the duke, with all the efforts he caused his troops to make, dissolve their phalanx; so that the victory remained

undecided, from nine in the morning, even till the close of the day, when Harold was killed by the random flight of an arrow, which, not being shot, like the rest, up into the air, but in a lower and more oblique direction, pierced the ball of his eye, and penetrated from thence into his brain. The hearts of the English now sunk: they began immediately to give way in several places. The Norman cavalry, rushing in through the breaches of the phalanx, made a great slaughter of those who stood within it. The brothers of Harold both fell. The royal standard was taken. After these losses, the whole army, entirely routed and dissipated, fled into the woods that lay behind them. The Normans pursued them, but not even in their flight did they lose all their courage; for having got into a valley which was full of deep ditches, they bravely made a new stand. There had been formerly, in that place, a camp well known to them, but not to the enemy; and the entrenchments being covered with shrubs and bushes, many of the Norman horse, pressing onwards, in the ardour of pursuit, fell headlong into them, while many others were killed by the hands of the English. If we may believe a contemporary writer, who heard it from some who were present, they lost in this valley near

fifteen thousand men; but it is more probable, that this number included the loss they had sustained in the battle. Some Norman barons of great note were slain in this action; and the earl of Boulogne was dangerously wounded, by a blow with a stone, while he was earnestly entreating the duke to retire, and not hazard his person against desperate men, whom the nature of the place so much assisted; but that intrepid prince, neither regarding the counsel, nor the alarming example of the person who gave it, continued the combat, till he had driven them out of this strong ground, and completed his victory.

"Thus ended the memorable battle of Hastings, in which the English, though defeated, showed at least as much valour as those by whom they were vanquished, but less expertness in the discipline and art of war. Yet their worst defect seems to have been the want of a cavalry equal to that of the Normans. It was their great inferioity in this respect, which made their pursuit of a flying enemy fatal to themselves."

Here Harry suddenly laid down the book. "Do you not remember, mamma," said he,

"that the very same thing, I mean the same kind of thing, happened to Xenophon, when he tried to pursue the light-horsemen of Mithridates, with his heavy-armed Greeks*? Ah, it is a great pity that Harold's soldiers knew nothing of that!"

* Grecian Stories, p. 279.

CONVERSATION ON FEUDAL GOVERNMENT.

Thy chiefs, the lords of many a petty fee,
Provok'd and harass'd, in return plagu'd thee;
Call'd thee away from peaceable employ,
Domestic happiness and rural joy,
To waste thy life in arms, or lay it down
In causeless feuds and bick'rings of their own.

COWPER.

"BEFORE we proceed any further with our English Stories, my dear children," said Mrs. B. "I think it will be necessary for you to have a general notion of what is meant by a *feudal government.* You are already acquainted with the three obligations to which the Anglo Saxon thanes were subjected: they were sufficiently explained in the story of Alfred*. Those services were considered as due to the country, rather than to the persons of their kings; and

* See page 97.

were agreed to by every body, as being necessary to the general safety and convenience*. The possessor of an estate was the sole owner of it: he held it of no superior lord, to whom he was bound to do homage, and this kind of property was called *allodial*†.

LUCY.

I am afraid I shall not remember that word, because I do not know the meaning of it.

MRS. B.

The word *alode* comes from the German *an*, and *lot:* it means *land obtained by lot*, which was the method used by the northern nations, for dividing the lands they had conquered. An allodial proprietor, therefore, is one who has either received his lands by lot, subject to these three conditions, or inherited them from his ancestors on the same terms; for, as an allodial estate belongs entirely to the owner of it, he may enjoy it himself, or give it to another, or leave it as an inheritance to his children‡. Do you clearly understand this?

LUCY.

Yes, mamma, that is plain enough.

MRS. B.

I believe that landed property in England,

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 234.

† Robertson's Charles V. vol. i. p. 256. ‡ *Ib.* p. 270.

remained in this state till the time of Canute the Great, who added a *fourth* obligation, which consisted in delivering to the king the horses and arms, that the earls and thanes were possessed of at the time of their death. This bore some resemblance to the rights claimed by *feudal* sovereigns*. I must try to explain that word.

Feodum, from which our word *feudal* is derived, is compounded of *feo*, wages, pay; and *od*, possession or estate: it means that the estate is granted as a recompence for service†.

The sovereign of a feudal state was considered as the proprietor of all the lands in his dominions. Part of them he retained in his own possession, for the maintenance of his family and the support of his dignity: the rest he granted to some of his subjects, as fees or rewards for services to be performed by them. These services were much more numerous and more oppressive than those to which *allodial* proprietors were subject‡.

HARRY.

You said that they were all allodial proprietors at first. How came they to give up their rights, and submit to these feudal services?

* Henry, vol. iii. p. 329. † Robertson, *ib.*
‡ Henry, *ib.* p. 330.

Mrs. B.

After the death of Charlemagne there was a time of great disorder and confusion in Europe, when there was scarcely any union in society, and each man was exposed, single and undefended, to the assaults of the rapacious and the powerful. In this unhappy situation he found himself so insecure, that it was necessary to obtain the protection of some powerful chief. He was, therefore, willing to relinquish his allodial independence, and to subject himself to feudal services, that he might find safety under the patronage of a superior; and it was in this manner that the change from allodial to feudal property was effected*.

This system had become general in France, but only some traces of it were observable in England before the Conquest. William of Normandy completed the feudal form of government, to which he was accustomed in his own country; the abject state to which the English were reduced, enabling him to impose new customs upon them. This was, however, a work of time. William found many allodial estates in the hands of the great nobility; but in the twentieth year of his reign, his commissioners having finished that survey of the different counties,

*Robertson, p. 266, &c.

(except those of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland,) which is registered in the Doomsday-book, he summoned all the great men and landholders to do homage and swear fealty to him*.

The sovereign of a feudal kingdom never appeared in greater glory, than when he received the homage of his immediate vassals, in his great court or parliament. Seated upon his throne, in his royal robes, with his crown on his head, surrounded by his nobles and dignified clergy, he beheld his greatest prelates and most powerful barons, uncovered and unarmed, on their knees before him. In that humble posture they put both their hands between his, and solemnly plighted their faith to live and die with him against all manner of men†. How should you like such an exhibition as this, Harry?

HARRY.

I dare say it was a very fine, grand sight, but it seems to me unfit for freemen. I hate the sound of an *English vassal!*

LUCY.

I suppose it was only the great and powerful who came to do homage to the king; or did these feudal services oppress the common people?

MRS. B.

It was not only the great barons, who received

*Millar's Eng. Gov. vol. ii. p. 21, *note.* †Henry, p. 332.

their lands immediately from the king, that were subject to feudal exactions: when they returned to their own castles, after taking the oath of fealty, the barons imitated the example of the king, in disposing of the lands they had received from him. That part which lay immediately round their castles, they retained as their own demesne; and the rest they granted to their followers, on terms exactly similar to those on which they had received the whole estate from the crown. Thus, a feudal baron was a king in miniature, and his barony a little kingdom. His vassals did him homage, attended his courts, followed him into the field with a certain number of troops, proportioned to the land which they held, and paid him certain rents and fines. These, and other troublesome and oppressive services, were exacted by the baron, who was himself subject to the same claims from the king. The vassals of the baron sometimes divided their estates among inferior proprietors, who then became subject to the same conditions, exactly on the same plan. Thus, the distressing servitudes of the feudal system, descended from the sovereign to the meanest possessor of land by military tenure, becoming heavier as they descended lower*; the lowest rank still continuing in a state of slavery†.

* Henry, p. 336. † *Ib.* p. 324.

HARRY.

Then the very same men were slaves and tyrants by turns. Mother, I am very glad that *we* do not live under a feudal government!

MRS. B.

Indeed you have reason to be glad of it, my dear; and I hope, as we proceed in reading our English Stories, you will become better acquainted with our excellent constitution, which is not only adapted to restrain the insolence of the powerful, but to defend the just rights of the meanest subject. But we have talked long enough about governments; we will now take a walk, and in the evening, perhaps, we may continue our reading. The next story relates some particulars of the life and reign of a feudal monarch, which made these explanations necessary.

HARRY.

I assure you, mamma, the explanations are not at all tiresome to me, for I wish to understand what grown-up people talk about; and I know that papa's visiters are very often speaking of governments.

MRS. B.

Well then, Harry, I will tell you one thing more: it is easy to understand, and it is regarded as one of the chief distinctions between the Anglo Saxon, or allodial, and the Anglo

Norman, or feudal government. In the former, the power of making war or peace was invariably possessed by the Wittena-gemote, or assembly of wise men: in the latter, that power was exercised by the king; and this branch of the feudal system, which appears to have been originally intended to enable the sovereign to defend his dominions from sudden and unexpected invasions, which were frequent in that rude period, remains even now, when, from a total change of manners, the circumstances which occasioned this power to be vested in the sovereign no longer exist*. Now then, Harry, in what respect does the king of England resemble a feudal monarch?

HARRY.

Because he may declare war, without asking the opinion of his parliament.

MRS. B.

He may *declare* war, but, happily for England, he cannot carry it on, without the approbation of parliament. I will tell you *why* another time.

* Millar, vol. ii. p. 90, 91.

HENRY PLANTAGENET.

What charms th' historic Muse adorn, from spoils,
And blood, and tyrants, when she wings her flight
To hail the Patriot Prince!

BEATTIE.

"NOW then, for William the Conqueror!" said Harry, taking the manuscript volume out of his mother's work-table drawer. "Come, Lucy, it is your turn to read."

"He is not one of my heroes," said Mrs. B. indeed, his reign was such a melancholy period to our countrymen, that I willingly passed it over. Our next story relates to the great grandson of the Conqueror, Henry the Second. You know the order in which the kings of England succeeded each other, therefore you can tell me how many other reigns I have missed.

LUCY.

William Rufus, Henry the First, and Stephen. Shall I begin to read, mamma?

MRS. B.

If you please, my dear. And as our story

introduces the hero of it to notice, even during the life of Henry the First, it will afford us an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Stephen.

Lucy then opened the book, and read the following story of

HENRY PLANTAGENET.

The birth of Henry Plantagenet could scarcely occasion more joy to his own parents, than it gave to his aged grandfather, Henry the First. Anxious to secure, as far as it was possible to do so, the succession of this infant to the English throne, the king celebrated the return of Easter with great festivity, at Oxford, where all the nobility swore fealty to the empress Matilda, the daughter of Henry, and to her little boy*. The English were, perhaps, more readily induced to this, because Henry, in hopes of gaining their favour, had married the princess Matilda of Scotland, whose mother was one of the Saxon royal family: his little grandson, therefore, united the claims both of the Norman and the Saxon kings†.

King Henry went over to Normandy to visit his daughter, and see the child whose birth had

* Henry, vol. iii. p. 58. † Lyttelton, vol. i. p. 223

occasioned so much rejoicing. He did not live long, to watch the growth of his favourite, but died before Henry Plantagenet had completed his third year*.

No sooner was the king's death made known, than a bold usurper started up, and deprived Matilda of the throne, which her father had so anxiously endeavoured to secure first to her, and then to her infant son. This was Stephen, earl of Boulogne, who, to the astonishment of every body, in violation of acknowledged right, of his own most solemn oaths, and of all the ties of gratitude, endeavoured to deprive of their just inheritance, the daughter and grandson of the uncle whose generous kindness had bestowed upon him all the wealth and power that he possessed†.

HARRY.

I am sure that was very shameful conduct, and I think the English must have been a different kind of people then, or they would never have suffered it.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The friends of the empress Matilda were so much astonished by this unexpected revolution, that they did not know how to act. It happened that Matilda, and her husband Geoffrey Plan-

* Henry, *ib.* p. 59. † *Ib.* p. 60.

tagenet, were in Anjou; and Robert, earl of Gloucester, the nearest relation of the empress, and the most virtuous, wise, and powerful nobleman of her party, was in Normandy. Stephen, the usurper, turned these circumstances to the best advantage. Conscious that he had no right to the throne, he sought to gain the favour of the prelates and nobles who were present at his coronation, by swearing to observe any conditions they were pleased to dictate. He also sought the good opinion of the clergy, by requesting the pope to confirm his title: while he denied nothing which the nobles chose to ask, even allowing them all to fortify their castles. He practised other arts with the common people, which won them to his cause. But his usurpation involved himself, his family, and his country, in great calamities*.

England, during the reign of Stephen, was a scene of confusion, misery, and civil war†. We shall not notice these events further than it may be necessary to do so in order to understand the story of Henry Plantagenet.

HARRY.

Why is he called Plantagenet, mamma? We have heard of nothing like surnames before, in English history.

* Henry, *ib.* p. 62, &c. † *Ib.* p. 83.

Mrs. B.

The use of family surnames, descending from father to son, is supposed to have been introduced into England at the Norman conquest, or soon afterwards. Among the Anglo Saxons, persons who bore the same Christian name were distinguished from each other by some descriptive epithet*. You have heard of Alfred the *Truth-teller;* and that king, whose barbarous massacre of the Danish mercenaries was mentioned in the story of Harold, was never prepared to resist effectually the attacks of his enemies, *he* was called Ethelred the *Unready.* I might easily produce many other instances, but these are sufficient. These names did not become family names: they belonged to the individual who bore them. In the Norman period, when family names were first introduced, they were confined to persons of rank and fortune, and were often derived from their castles or estates†. The name of Plantagenet, which belonged to the father of our little hero, and descended from him to many English kings, originated from a whimsical circumstance. It is said that Geoffrey Plantagenet, the husband of Matilda, was accustomed to wear a sprig of heath or broom on the crest of his helmet. I

* Henry, *ib.* p. 563. † *Ib.* p. 564.

need not tell you the English of *planta;* but I believe you do not know that *genista* is Latin for *broom*, a plant with which you are well acquainted. From these words, and this circumstance, the name Plantagenet was derived*.

HARRY.

I like the sound of Plantagenet, but it is a poor shabby name when translated: Henry Broom-plant. Oh, it sounds quite ridiculous! and I should think a man would be ashamed of sticking flowers in his hat, like a child of four years old who has been gathering buttercups in a meadow.

LUCY.

So it would be ridiculous in a *hat*, but not in a helmet. Do you not remember, Harry, in that picture you admire so much, Bruce has De Argentine's glove in his helmet†. *That* is still more unlike our manners: nobody laughs at a lady for wearing a flower in her bonnet, and I can easily suppose that it might once be the fashion for gentlemen. Shall I read on?

HARRY.

Yes if, you please; but never translate *Plantagenet*. I like a grand name for a hero. Mamma, before we begin reading again, I wish

* Lyttelton, vol. i. p. 213.

† See Westall's Illustrations of the Lord of the Isles.

you would tell me why Matilda is called the *empress:* that is not an English title?

MRS. B.

She had been married to Henry the Fifth, emperor of Germany, and after his death she retained the title of empress. The pope's legate, who supported the pretensions of Stephen, did not, however, honour her with this appellation, but called her, what she really was after her second marriage, "the countess of Anjou*."

[*Lucy reads.*]

The empress had been for some time in England, often surrounded by dangers, and sometimes escaping from them in a surprising manner, but always supported and assisted by her faithful friend, the earl of Gloucester. While this terrible struggle for the crown continued, the country was reduced to a most deplorable state. The year 1140 was one of the most calamitous that had ever been known in England. War raged from one end of the nation to the other; for not only the great barons, but all the lords of castles, of which there were several hundreds in the kingdom, declared for the king or for the empress, and made cruel war on the opposite party. Many of these castles were no better than dens of robbers, who sallied forth to plun-

*Henry, *ib.* p. 77.

der and murder all parties without distinction. The smoke of burning towns, villages, monasteries, and churches, was every where to be seen. In such a fearful state, neither commerce nor agriculture could be attended to: a dreadful famine was the consequence, in which many thousands perished. In the course of this year there were a great many sieges and skirmishes, but no action likely to determine the contest; and the noblest blood of England flowed in vain*.

At length Stephen was taken prisoner by the earl of Gloucester, who treated his captive with great humanity; and had the empress resembled him in character, her cause would now in all probability have triumphed. But moderation in prosperity, is a virtue of which Matilda appears to have had no idea. She was naturally very proud, and now elated beyond measure by the change in her situation, she behaved with great disdain and insolence to those who had been her enemies, even when they came to make the most humble submissions to her authority. Conceited as well as proud, she slighted the advice of her uncle, David king of Scotland, who came to pay her a visit; and also the counsels of her sure friend, the earl of Gloucester, to whom she was

* Henry, p. 71, 72.

so much indebted. At length, her misconduct threw every thing into confusion, and occasioned another revolution*.

At the earnest request of all the empress's party, the earl of Gloucester crossed over to Normandy, in order to bring back the husband of Matilda, or her son Henry, who was now between eight and nine years old. The state of affairs in Normandy detained the earl for some time abroad. During his absence the empress resided at Oxford, which was at that time so surrounded by water as to be thought inaccessible, and was, besides, secured by the best fortifications then in use. The castle was deemed impregnable, and there Matilda thought herself perfectly safe. Stephen had, however, regained his liberty, and taking advantage of the absence of the earl, he carried on the war with fresh spirit. He approached Oxford while Matilda supposed him yet at a distance, and appeared with his army on the opposite bank of the river. The garrison relying on the protection afforded by so deep a stream, advanced to the brink of it, and discharged showers of arrows on the cavalry of the king, at the same time deriding him in the most insolent manner.

* Henry, p. 75.

Incensed by this conduct, Stephen pointed out a part of the river where he remembered that there had been a ford, and, spurring his horse, he courageously plunged into the stream. Animated by the example of their king, all the cavalry followed; and though the water was so deep that their horses were obliged to swim, they passed safely over, and charging the enemy, who stood motionless with astonishment, drove them into the town, entered it with them, set fire to several parts of it, and killed or took prisoners most of the garrison; those only escaping who gained admittance into the castle.

Thus, by one bold and successful effort, Stephen obtained possession of a city, which, from its situation, seemed likely to bid defiance to his power. But he was most delighted with the prospect of making the imperious Matilda his captive, after having so lately been in her power himself. He held her now shut up in the castle as in a prison, and he resolved to gain possession of this fortress, either by force or by famine. He therefore assaulted it furiously with battering engines, and at the same time prevented any communication between the country and the besieged. The barons, who had pledged their faith to the earl of Gloucester, that they would guard the empress from all danger in his absence, attempted to draw

Stephen away from his post, by offering him battle; but to seize his rival was the object which that prince had at heart, and no artifice could change his purpose. After consulting several times in vain, the barons despaired of effecting any thing for the relief of Matilda, and drew off their forces. But, though thus deserted, the invincible spirit of the besieged empress remained unshaken. Preferring death to captivity, she animated her garrison, which was chiefly composed of the knights and officers of her household, with courage like her own. She was in this situation when the news of her danger reached the earl of Gloucester, who immediately took a hasty leave of the earl of Anjou, and with little Henry Plantagenet set sail for England*.

The siege had now continued three months, and the garrison in the castle was reduced to great extremity by famine. In this desperate situation the courageous empress is said to have effected her escape, in a manner equally ingenious and surprising. The river being frozen, and the ground covered with snow, she dressed herself and three trusty knights in white, and about midnight they silently left the castle by a

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 48—53.

postern gate, passed all the centinels of the enemy undiscovered, travelled on foot to Abingdon, and from that place on horseback to Wallingford. There she was soon after joined by the brave earl of Gloucester, who was marching at the head of an army to her relief, and enjoyed the pleasure of seeing her son, who was in company with that nobleman*.

HARRY.

I suppose she had heard, that in cold countries animals escape from the observation of their enemies by changing white in winter. It was a clever thought, to turn that circumstance to her own advantage. And how glad she must have felt, to be out of Stephen's power, and to meet her little boy! Read on, Lucy, I hope we shall hear something about him.

[*Lucy reads.*]

During the rest of the winter all remained quiet, and Matilda was consoled for her sufferings by the company of her son, whom she wisely intrusted to the earl of Gloucester. Henry remained four years at Bristol, under the care of that nobleman, who trained him up in such exercises as were most proper to inure his body to the fatigues of war, and in those studies which were likely to adorn and to strengthen

* Henry, p. 78.

his mind. The earl himself had a considerable share of learning, and was the patron of all who excelled in it. He inspired his pupil with that love for literature by which he was himself distinguished; and, under his instructions, the youthful Henry acquired an ardour for study, and a knowledge of books, not to be found in any other prince of those times. He gained other and more important advantages from this excellent preceptor, who directed his earliest impressions; and who, not only in learning and valour, but in magnanimity, prudence, and other moral virtues, was himself a striking example, excelling every other nobleman of that age. Our hero had yet another advantage in being removed from the luxury of a court, and habituated to the exercises of chivalry, which gave a manly turn to his mind, and made him despise an effeminate and slothful life. Above all, in this situation the earl of Gloucester was able to preserve his pupil from the poison of flattery; and the first lessons he learned were those of truth. While Henry was thus trained to greatness by a good education, the kingdom he was born to inherit, was contended for with alternate success by his mother and Stephen; and so many sudden and wonderful changes of fortune happened to both those rival sovereigns,

that nothing like it is to be found in history, and hardly in any well-invented romance*.

HARRY.

I wish your story would tell us a few more of these changes: I have a notion that Matilda's adventures would be very entertaining.

MRS. B.

I dare say you will find them so, when you are old enough to read the history of England; but if we follow Matilda and Stephen through all their vicissitudes, we shall lose sight of Henry, who was spending his time more happily and more usefully. Read on, my dear.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Prince Henry had resided in the castle of Bristol for more than four years, when his father, Geoffrey of Anjou, sent for him to return to Normandy. The earl attended his royal pupil to Wareham, whence he embarked for the continent. This was the last parting between the prince and his excellent preceptor, who died at his castle of Bristol, about five months afterwards†.

HARRY.

I am very sorry to hear that: it was a great pity for Henry to lose so good a friend.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The empress had no resource which could

* Lyttelton vol. ii. p. 58, 59. † Henry, p. 79.

supply the loss of the earl of Gloucester. Courage and resentment for awhile preserved her from despair; nor was it without the most painful reluctance, that she yielded to the necessity of leaving a country, over which she had so long expected to reign. In less than four months, however, she was obliged to abandon England, and, returning to Normandy, soothed the anguish of her mind by the hope that her son, when he should be a man, might be able to revenge her on Stephen, and recover the crown she had lost. Her whole care was therefore employed on his education. She laboured to inspire him with thoughts like her own—to excite in him an ardour for glory, an ambition for empire, and a spirit of conquest. These feelings were sufficiently agreeable to a spirited boy of fourteen: happily for him, their effect was tempered by the lessons of prudence and humanity which he had been taught at Bristol, and which his father, a prince of great discretion and judgment, continued to fix in his mind*.

LUCY.

I am glad to find that he had a wise father. I was afraid Matilda was going to make him as ambitious and insolent as herself.

MRS. B.

I fear we shall hereafter discover some traces

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 150, &c.

of Matilda, in the character of her son. Let us hear how his education proceeded.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Two years passed away amidst these contradictory instructions, and Henry attained the age of sixteen: an important period in the days of chivalry, for he was now old enough to receive the honour of knighthood. His father determined that it should be conferred upon him by his mother's uncle, David king of Scotland. He therefore sent Henry, attended by a numerous and splendid retinue, to Carlisle, where the Scottish monarch then held his court; and the ceremony was performed on the 22d of May, 1149, in the midst of a great assembly of the nobles of England, Scotland, and Normandy *.

HARRY.

I wonder how the king of Scotland could hold his court at Carlisle. You know, that is an English town.

MRS. B.

When David first took up arms against Stephen, in defence of the rights of his niece Matilda, his troops overran the northern counties: Stephen was glad to make peace, on condition of yielding Cumberland to the Scottish king†, who accordingly took possession of that county,

* Henry, *ib.* p. 80. † *Ib.* p. 63.

and established his court at Carlisle. David had been educated in England, under the care of his uncle, Edgar Atheling; and, after his sister Matilda married king Henry the First, he resided frequently in the English court, and became much attached to the English manners and way of living, which, when he became king, he endeavoured to introduce among his own subjects. David also married an English lady, the heiress of the earl of Northumberland, and, during the latter years of Stephen's reign, he possessed our four northern counties *.

HARRY.

Thank you, mamma: I understand it now; and I wish you would explain something else that puzzles me. Why was there such a grand parade when prince Henry was knighted? We hear of people being made knights now, without such long journeys and great assemblies. I thought it was just put in the newspaper, and there was an end of it.

MRS. B.

This affair was very differently managed in the days of chivalry. To obtain the honour of knighthood, was then an object of ambition to the greatest princes.

There are many curious particulars connected

* Henry, *ib.* p. 84, 85.

with this subject, which would afford you a great deal of entertainment; and as the spirit of chivalry was introduced into England by the Normans, and gave a new turn to the education of the young nobility and gentry, it is desirable for you to know something of its nature; and I think we cannot have a more suitable opportunity than the present for explaining it, if you feel any curiosity on the subject.

HARRY.

I have a great deal of curiosity, I assure you, mamma; for I have only a grand, confused notion of knights in armour, on prancing horses, and I should like to understand the real truth.

MRS. B.

Those noble youths who were designed to receive the honours of knighthood, during their childhood were placed in the family of some great prince or baron, who was considered a brave and skilful knight.

At their first entrance into this school of chivalry, they acted as pages or valets; for those appellations, which now belong to servants, were then bestowed even on the sons and brothers of kings. In this first stage of their progress they were instructed in the laws of courtesy and politeness, and in martial exercises. These qualifications were intended to fit them for appearing in courts, at tournaments, or in the

field of battle. Henry Plantagenet received this part of his education in the family of his relation and preceptor, the earl of Gloucester, who was one of the most accomplished knights of that age.

After they had spent a sufficient time in the station of pages, they were advanced to the more honourable rank of esquires. They were then admitted into more familiar intercourse with the knights and ladies of the court, and perfected in dancing, riding, hawking, hunting, tilting, and the other accomplishments in which knights were expected to excel*. But you may read an account of these exercises, written by one who lived in the times of which I am speaking. There is the third volume of "Henry's History of England" on that table; bring it to me, Harry.

Mrs. B. then turned to p. 559, and Harry read the following passage:

"Every Sunday in Lent, immediately after dinner, crowds of noble and sprightly youths, mounted on war-horses, admirably trained to perform all their turnings and evolutions, ride into the field, in distinct bands, armed with lances and shields, and exhibit representations of battles, and go through all their martial

* Henry, *ib.* p. 558, &c.

exercises. Many of the young nobility who have not yet received the honour of knighthood, issue from the king's court, and from the houses of bishops, earls, and barons, to make trial of their courage, strength, and skill in arms. The hope of victory rouses the spirit of these noble youths: their fiery horses neigh and prance, and champ their foaming bits. At length the signal is given, and the sports begin. The youths divide into opposite bands, and encounter one another. In one place some fly, and others pursue, without being able to overtake them. In another place, one of the bands overtakes and overturns the other."

HARRY.

Oh, this is delightful! I wish I had been born in the days of chivalry!

MRS. B.

Rather rejoice, my dear boy, that you live at a time when the feelings of honour, of justice, and humanity, which were revived by the spirit of chivalry, have become so general, that such institutions are no longer necessary to support them. But in that period of barbarous ignorance, the liberal and generous sentiments inspired by chivalry, were of important service in refining the manners of the European nations. Feudal monarchies were too frequently the scenes of war, rapine, and confusion, which

exposed the weak and defenceless to continual injuries. The power of the king was too limited to prevent these evils, and public justice was then too weak to punish the oppressors. The most effectual protection was often to be found in the valour and generosity of the *knights* of whom we have been speaking. Courage, humanity, courtesy, justice, and honour, were the distinguishing qualities of chivalry. To check the insolence of oppressors, to rescue the helpless from captivity, to protect or to avenge women, orphans, and those who could not bear arms in their own defence, were therefore considered as acts of the greatest merit*. The order of knighthood was generally conferred at the altar, with the most impressive ceremonies; thus adding the motives of religion to the feelings of honour. Indeed, the spirit of the institution was so exalted, and so heroic, that it was peculiarly fitted to seize the imagination, and influence the actions of young men. It has even been asserted, that, from the ninth to the sixteenth century, those characters which have descended with most honour to later ages, derived their virtues chiefly from this source†.

LUCY.

Mamma, if any body had told me beforehand,

* Robertson, *ib.* p. 82—83. † Lyttelton, vol. iii. p. 161.

that *you* would have said so much in praise of a military institution, I could not have believed it.

MRS. B.

Remember, my love, that I praise chivalry, because it was one of the means by which the manners and feelings of the European nations were humanized and refined. The feudal governments, under which chivalry flourished, were also of a military character; and from their oppressive exactions, and the encouragement they afforded to the desolating practice of private war, they were not calculated to promote the peace and good order of society.

LUCY.

I do not understand what you mean by *private war*, mamma.

MRS. B.

You have seen that religion, in those barbarous ages, was supposed to consist in performing pilgrimages, and making rich presents to the church, but appears to have been very little applied to the regulation of the stormy passions of men. In such a state of society, and among people educated in military habits, revenge was continually exciting them to warlike enterprises. Every man who owned a castle to shelter him in case of defeat, and had a sufficient number of dependants to follow his banner, was at liberty

to wage war upon his neighbours, whenever he thought himself injured *. This mode of revenging injuries was called *private* war, as being carried on by individuals on their own account; and such was the cruelty with which it was exercised, that the invasion of the most barbarous enemy could not be more desolating to a country, or more fatal to its inhabitants †.

HARRY.

Well, mamma, though you praised chivalry, I am sure you cannot say a word for the feudal governments which suffered these private wars.

MRS. B.

As your knowledge of history increases, my dear boy, you will perceive how intimately good and evil are blended in human affairs. Notwithstanding their great defects, the feudal institutions produced many good consequences; and we may now look back upon them, as part of the means by which Providence has been carrying on the great work of moral improvement. They arose at a period when the nations of Europe were sunk into a state of utter depravity: a period distinguished by the prevalence of falsehood, treachery, and ingratitude. The feudal spirit then exerted a beneficial influence. Violation of faith was considered as one of the

* Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 163, 4to edit.

† Robertson, *ib.* p. 332.

greatest crimes; and because it would have destroyed the security of feudal tenures, it was severely and quickly avenged, and branded by general infamy. The institutions of chivalry still further refined the sense of honour, and polished the manners of the higher orders. Thus was the spirit of liberty and independence kept alive, through a dark and stormy period, when the power of the crown might have destroyed the rights of the subject, if, while the people were poor and disunited, the nobility had not been brave and free*.

HARRY.

How very difficult it is to judge of any thing!

MRS. B.

I am glad you are beginning to be sensible of that truth, Harry; it will teach you modesty and caution. When you are in a hurry to decide, you are thrown into confusion by continual changes of opinion. A few minutes ago, you thought that nothing could be said in favour of feudal governments: you now find that they were the means of inspiring a sense of honourable obligation, in minds which, but for them, would have been utterly depraved. But do not, on this account, give them more praise than is justly their due. The precepts

* Hallam, *ib.* p. 227, &c.

of chivalry, and the whole progress of knightly accomplishments, though they constituted the ornament and the glory of the feudal ages, were but little adapted to improve the mental faculties. Useful learning and the arts of policy were then so far from being properly studied, that they were generally left to clergymen, as unworthy of the noble profession of arms*. This produced two great evils. As "knowledge is power," the superiority of the clergy in this respect gave them far more than their just influence in society; and, as the possession of power is too apt to strengthen ambition and avarice in the hearts of all men, the clergy soon learned to make religion a pretence for advancing the exclusive interest of their own order, and increasing their wealth and authority.

LUCY.

Mamma, you said just now, that the order of knighthood was conferred with very "impressive ceremonies:" I wish you would be so kind as to describe them!

MRS. B.

Harry can satisfy your curiosity, from the book which lies before him. Give it to me, my dear, and I will find the place for you.

* Lyttelton, vol. iii. p. 179.

Harry then read the following passage, from p. 561 of Henry's History.

"When the youth in these schools of chivalry had spent seven or eight years in the station of esquires, they received the honour of knighthood, most commonly from the hands of the prince, earl, or baron, in whose court they had spent their youth and received their education. ——Severe fastings—nights spent in prayer in a church or chapel—the sacraments of penance and the eucharist received with devotion—bathing, and putting on white robes, as emblems of that purity of manners required by the laws of chivalry—confession of all their sins—with serious attention to several sermons, in which the faith and morals of a good Christian were explained—were the necessary preparations for receiving the honour of knighthood. When a candidate for that honour had performed all these preliminaries, he went in procession into a church, and advanced to the altar with a sword slung in a scarf about his neck. He presented his sword to a priest, who blessed it, and put it again into the scarf about the neck of the candidate, who then proceeded in a solemn pace, with his hands joined, to the place where he was to be knighted. This august ceremony was most commonly performed in a church or chapel, in the great hall of a

palace or castle, or in the open air. When the candidate approached the personage by whom he was to be knighted, he fell on his knees at his feet, and delivered to him his sword. Being asked, For what end he desired the honour of knighthood? and having returned a proper answer, the usual oath was administered to him with great solemnity. After this, knights and ladies, who assisted at the ceremony, began to adorn the candidate with the armour and ensigns of knighthood. First they put on his spurs, beginning with the left foot; next his coat of mail; then his cuirass; afterwards the several pieces of armour for his arms, hands, legs, and thighs; and last of all they girt him with the sword. When the candidate was thus *dubbed*, as it was called, the king, prince, or baron, who was to make him a knight, descended from his throne or seat, and gave him, still on his knees, the *accolade*, which was three gentle strokes, with the flat of his sword on the shoulder, or with the palm of his hand on the cheek; saying at the same time, '*In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I make thee a knight; be thou brave, hardy, and loyal.*' The new knight was then raised from the ground, his helmet put on, his shield and lance delivered to him, and his horse brought, which he mounted without using the stirrup,

and performed several courses; displaying his dexterity in horsemanship, and in the management of his arms, amidst the acclamations of great multitudes of people, who had assembled to behold the ceremony."

LUCY.

Oh, Harry, I am sure that description is the very thing to please you! It must have been a grand sight; but for all that, I am glad we want no knights to defend us now: the pleasure was not worth the danger.

The next evening, after tea, the little party drew round the table, on which Mrs. B. had, as usual, laid the Atlas and the manuscript. It was Harry's turn to read, and he continued the story of Henry Plantagenet, as follows:

The young prince spent about eight months at the court of his uncle, perfecting himself in his military exercises. In the month of January, 1150, he returned to Normandy, and soon afterwards his father resigned the government of that duchy to him. Geoffrey survived this event but a short time, and Henry then took possession of the rest of his father's dominions: Anjou, Touraine, and Maine. He was now,

according to the custom of the feudal times, a vassal of the king of France, and he went to the court of Louis the Seventh, to do homage for the territories which he had inherited.

The next important event in the life of Henry, was his marriage with Eleanor, the heiress of Guienne and Poitou*: this connexion placed another large portion of France at his disposal.

LUCY.

Only look, mamma, at this map of France in Provinces†. See, Normandy, Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, Guienne!—why Henry's territories reached from the English Channel, almost to the shores of the Mediterranean! If he had been inclined to make mischief, I think that Louis would have found it difficult to manage so powerful a subject.

MRS. B.

That was one of the great inconveniences to which feudal governments were liable. Nobles who had acquired such enormous power, often scorned to consider themselves as subjects; a kingdom of considerable extent was thus broken into as many little states as it contained powerful barons: these barons often quarrelled among themselves, and exercised their right of making private war, as I have already told you. Every

*Henry, *ib.* p. 80—81. † See Smith's Atlas.

country in Europe was thus kept in continual alarm, and was filled with castles and places of strength, for the security of the inhabitants*. But read on, Harry. We must not wander from our hero as we did last night. Our knight is now become a baron.

[*Harry reads.*]

Such powerful vassals often proved rebellious subjects: superior to all restraint, they often humbled or insulted their sovereign†. But as the evils of the feudal system descended with its oppressive services from rank to rank, these haughty barons were often compelled to endure from their own vassals the injuries which they inflicted on their king. Henry Plantagenet was besieging the castle of one of his own rebellious barons in Normandy, when he heard that Stephen, who had so long usurped the English crown, was dead‡. Now there had been a solemn engagement entered into a few months before this event, between Stephen, Henry, and the English barons, by which it was settled that the former should retain possession of the throne during his life, and that Henry should succeed him. This wise arrangement, proposed by the earl of Arundel§, was the means of pre-

* Robertson, *ib.* p. 18—19. † *Ib.* ‡ Henry, *ib.* p. 86.
§ Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 234.

venting much bloodshed, misery, and vice; for among the various evils attendant on civil war, one of the most dreadful is the general corruption of manners, hardness of heart, and familiarity with the most horrid crimes, which it seldom fails to produce*.

When Henry received the unexpected news of the death of his rival, he did not immediately set out for England; but finished the siege in which he was engaged, by taking the castle, and then made the necessary preparations for his voyage. The ceremony of his coronation took place at Westminster, on the 19th of December, 1154. Henry had then nearly completed his twenty-second year, and was considered every way qualified to succeed to the crown, and worthy to reign over the united Normans and English, being descended from the sovereigns of both nations. His accession was, therefore, the cause of general satisfaction, as it put an end to those destructive civil wars, which had brought the country to the brink of ruin†.

The first acts of Henry's government confirmed the high opinion which his subjects entertained of his spirit and abilities. A number of foreign soldiers had been kept in the country during the reign of Stephen: these

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 245. † *Ib.* p. 233; and Henry, p. 86.

hirelings had long been the scourge and the reproach of England, and were become justly odious. Henry issued a proclamation, commanding them all, under pain of death, to depart the kingdom by a certain day; and they all vanished before the appointed time. He gave orders that the numerous castles, which had been erected in every part of England during the civil wars, should be levelled with the ground; and these orders were executed, though in some places with great reluctance. A few of the castles, which, from their situation, were judged to be necessary for the defence of the kingdom, were exempted from the general destruction*.

LUCY.

I suppose Arundel castle is one of those that were spared; for that part of it where the curious owls are kept, looks very ancient indeed.

MRS. B.

You are right, Lucy; it *is* very ancient. Indeed, our favourite Alfred is supposed to have been the founder of Arundel castle†.

HARRY.

Oh, then I am heartily glad that Henry did not order it to be destroyed! and I shall always love that old, gloomy, ivy-grown tower, for

* Henry, *ib.* p. 86; and Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 289.
† Dallaway's West. Sus. Prel. Hist. p. 30.

Alfred's sake. I wish I had known this when we went to see the owls: how I would have peeped into every corner!

MRS. B.

Do not let your imagination run quite away with your judgment, dear boy. I am not sure that this story is true, though antiquarians think there is reason to believe it. You had better read on, I think.

[*Harry reads.*]

During the unhappy contest which had been carried on for so many years, Stephen and Matilda had, both of them, lessened the power and riches of the crown, by giving away estates and castles which properly belonged to the sovereign, in order to gain the favour of their respective partisans. Henry was desirous of restoring the royal possessions to the same state in which they had been left by his grandfather; and he obtained a decree from his parliament, empowering him to resume these imprudent grants. He executed this difficult business very impartially, and more easily than could have been supposed*. There was, however, a nobleman, named Roger de Mortimer, who persisted in refusing to deliver up his castle, though

* Henry, p. 87.

the king went and laid siege to it in person. A remarkable circumstance happened during this siege. Henry was busied in giving orders, and stood nearer to the castle wall than was prudent: one of Mortimer's archers seized the favourable moment, and aimed an arrow at the king. This was observed by Hubert de St. Clare, who was standing close beside him, and seeing no other way to save the life of his sovereign, he stepped before him, and received the arrow in his own breast. The wound was mortal, and the generous Hubert expired in the arms of Henry, recommending his only child, an infant daughter, to the care of that prince. He was faithful to the trust. The daughter of Hubert was educated by the king, with all the affection which he owed to the memory of her father: when she grew up, he married her to a distinguished nobleman, whom he commanded to take the name of St. Clare, gratefully desiring to perpetuate the remembrance of his benefactor*.

MRS. B.

Which do you admire most, the subject who died to save his king, or the king whose virtues rendered him so dear to a subject whom he had not obliged by any extraordinary favours†?

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 296, &c. † *Ib.*

HARRY.

I like the subject a great deal the best. Hubert was quite a hero! But I dare say that Henry was a very good king, or even a hero would hardly have been willing to die for him. So, now we have settled that point, I will go on with my story.

[*He reads.*]

At length Mortimer was obliged to surrender at discretion, and, expecting no mercy from the sovereign whose power he alone had presumed to defy, his haughty spirit sunk, and humbled itself to supplications for pardon. Henry was satisfied with having obtained the point he aimed at: he forgave Mortimer, and left him in free possession of all his honours and estates, except those which had belonged to the demesne of the crown.

Thus was concluded this important business, which gave Henry an opportunity of adorning the beginning of his reign with proofs of two virtues, that, when happily united, are the chief supports of government, *great firmness* and *great clemency*. Besides the personal qualities which enabled Henry to succeed in this undertaking, he was assisted by the general opinion of the nation; and when a monarch thus secures the approbation of his people, no private inte-

rest can resist his power, while it is steadily and wisely administered.

Tranquillity being now restored to the kingdom, Henry began to think of securing the crown to his children; for no right of birth was, in those days, thought to be a sufficient title to the succession, unless the claim was acknowledged by parliament, and afterwards confirmed by feudal engagements. A parliament was therefore summoned to meet the king at Wallingford, in the year 1155, which settled the succession upon the eldest of the young princes, then a boy of three years old; and in case of his death, upon his little brother, who was born only a few weeks before. Oaths of fealty were accordingly taken to both*.

LUCY.

I am sure it must have been a very ridiculous sight, if all the bishops and barons kneeled down, and put their great hands between those of a little helpless infant, that could not hold its head steady!

[*Harry reads.*]

The satisfaction arising from this settlement of the succesion, was not confined to the king. The Normans and the English were equally desirous of establishing their monarchy in the

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 297, &c.

family of a prince whom they loved, and who sprung from the kings of both nations. Henry's respectable and popular government, his justice, his moderation, and the great kindness with which he treated even those who had been of Stephen's party, reconciled the minds of all to his sovereignty.

In this great flow of prosperity, when all difficulties gave way before him, if he had desired to become an absolute monarch, he probably would have succeeded, as other kings have done in similar circumstances. But Henry well understood the temper of the nation: he knew that though it might for a time submit to tyranny, it would not endure it long. He appears also to have possessed a nobleness of nature, which scorned the idea of becoming the master of slaves: he knew that a great king must be the ruler of a free people, and he readily determined in what manner he would govern England. In a parliament held this year at London, he voluntarily renewed to his people *a charter of liberties*, and confirmed the privileges granted to them by his grand-father, king Henry the First.

Thus, by the magnanimity of this excellent prince, was England, which had suffered so many years of misery from tyranny and faction, restored to the enjoyment of those lawful rights,

which are the proper defence against both these evils. It is true that our laws have been much improved since the time of Henry the Second; but under his sway the harshness of the Norman institutions was so tempered by the mixture of Saxon customs, that England afforded an example of the best feudal government existing at that time in the world.

Not contented with giving good laws to his people, Henry resolved that those laws should be well executed. This was a task which required activity, spirit, resolution, and that earnest desire to promote the public good with which his mind was animated. During the reign of Stephen the law had been an empty name, useless and powerless: neither life nor property was then secure. The sword of every ruffian was stronger than that of the magistrate, and the most notorious criminals were sure of reward, if they would only join in carrying on the horrors of civil war. Henry exerted his utmost endeavours to suppress the remains of this dreadful licentiousness, and to effect a change in the manners of his people. For some time he was engaged in the truly heroic labour of restoring the purity and vigour of justice, and establishing good order in his kingdom. "*He did not* (says a writer who knew him intimately) *sit*

still in his palace, as most other kings do; but, going over the provinces, explored the actions of all his subjects, chiefly judging those whom he had appointed the judges of others." Besides these journeys into the different counties, Henry attended in person at the judgment of all greater causes in his own court; and thus a constant sense of the superintending vigilance of the king, was kept up in the minds of the people; and the power of the crown, which they had been used to despise or to hate, was made both respectable and amiable to them. The meanest peasant who sued for justice against the highest nobleman, was favourably heard, and obtained from the king a speedy redress of his wrongs. Lawless plunderers were put to death without mercy, and other offences were corrected by exemplary punishments; so that even the most wicked were awed and restrained. Public safety being thus restored by the vigour of the laws, and the continual activity, watchfulness, and firmness of the sovereign, the farmer, the merchant, and the manufacturer returned to their former occupations; towns and villages were repeopled, trade and agriculture flourished, virtue and religion were promoted. Such were the consequences of Henry's wise administration, and thus he acquired the highest

glory a king can obtain—that of having reformed a depraved and corrupted state*.

LUCY.

I think Henry seems to be almost as good a king as Alfred.

MRS. B.

It is difficult to compare merit with any thing like exactness; but one thing appears to be clearly stated in history, that no king of England, since the days of Alfred, had ever done so much good, or gained so much love, in so short a time, as Henry Plantagenet in the first year of his reign, though he was only twenty-two years of age†.

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 298—303. † Henry, *ib.* p. 87,

THOMAS BECKET.

This man so cómplete,
Who was enroll'd 'mongst wonders, and when we,
Almost with ravish'd list'ning, could not find
His hour of speech a minute; he, my lady,
Hath into monstrous habits put the graces
That once were his.

SHAKSPEARE.

LUCY.

I THINK, mamma, that Henry the Second must have had very wise ministers, to help him settle his kingdom: you know, it would be impossible for *one man* to do all that is mentioned in your story, especially in so short a time.

MRS. B.

Very true; and therefore the most necessary part of royal wisdom, consists in the judicious choice of those persons who are to be intrusted with the administration. In this important duty of a sovereign, Henry particularly excelled, choosing men who were eminent for merit and abilities. The magnanimity of his character

appeared in his freedom from the spirit of party. You will understand this by his conduct with respect to Richard de Lucy, a gentleman who was distinguished for military abilities, for the knowledge of a lawyer, and the talents of a statesman. He had been highly in favour with Stephen, nor had he ever betrayed him, or deserted his service. Henry felt no mean jealousy on this account: he knew Richard de Lucy to be a man of integrity, as well as one who possessed great and various talents; and though he had, but a short time before the death of Stephen, appeared in arms against himself, Henry raised him to one of the most important offices, and highest dignities in the state. His conduct in this station fully justified the sagacity of the king. Richard de Lucy proved himself one of the best and most faithful servants that any prince ever employed: useful in all business, and as fit to command an army, as to preside in a court of justice or a council of state*. Henry's freedom from prejudice thus enabled him to avail himself of the virtues and abilities of all his subjects; and, I have no doubt, that the justice and candour he displayed in choosing his ministers, was a powerful means of gaining the esteem of all parties.

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 303—305.

LUCY.

Indeed, I think he deserved it. Since he was so wise himself, and chose such clever ministers, there could be no doubt that things would be well managed.

MRS. B.

You know, that in true stories we are not to expect perfect wisdom, or perfect virtue. Henry once made so great a mistake in his judgment of character, that he involved himself, for eight years, in a succession of difficulties and vexations. The circumstances of this affair are so remarkable, and the character of the man who so unworthily abused the confidence of a generous prince, is so extraordinary, that I think an account of him will interest you. Lucy may read it to us, if she pleases.

Lucy then took the book, and began the story of

THOMAS BECKET.

As a means of securing possession of the country which had so hastily submitted to his power, and trusted to his oaths, William the Conqueror took such good care to place riches and honours exclusively in the hands of his Norman followers, that, before the end of his reign, not one Englishman was either earl,

baron, bishop, or abbot*. This ungenerous policy continued to be practised during the three succeeding reigns; but the political views of Henry the Second were more enlarged, and under his wise and liberal government, the narrow distinctions of party spirit seemed to be forgotten.

Nearly a century had now elapsed since the Norman conquest, and no man of English descent had yet risen to any considerable station†; when, in the year 1158, Thomas Becket was, at the earnest recommendation of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, appointed by the king to the high office of chancellor of England‡. This man, the most extraordinary person of the age in which he lived, was born at London, in the year 1117. His father and ancestors had lived there contentedly and quietly among their fellow-citizens, apparently in the middle rank of life. The education of Becket was intended to qualify him for the church, and when he attained to manhood, his father sent him to finish his studies at Paris. After some time he returned to London, and was introduced to the archbishop of Canterbury, who was very much pleased with him, both on account of his uncommon abilities,

* Henry, vol. iii. p. 28. † Hume, vol. i. p. 383.
‡ Henry, *ib.* p. 242.

and his graceful, engaging manners. He bestowed some church preferment on the young candidate, who soon desired to qualify himself for greater honours; and, knowing that the study of the law was most likely to contribute to his advancement, he prevailed on the archbishop to send him to Bologna, then the most famous university in the world, especially for that particular kind of knowledge in which young Becket desired to excel. He returned to England a skilful lawyer, and with still superior talents for managing the tempers and influencing the actions of men. Theobald soon discovered this, and despatched his young student to Rome, to settle some business with the pope, which the archbishop considered of great importance to the see of Canterbury. This commission was executed with such dexterity and success, that Becket was afterwards intrusted with all the most secret intrigues of his patron, and continued to be his agent at the court of Rome*.

When the recommendation of Theobald had obtained the high office of chancellor for Becket, he paid his court so successfully to his royal master, not only by his dexterity in business, but by his splendid style of living and agreeable conversation, that he became his greatest fa-

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 306, &c.

vourite, and the chief companion of his amusements*. The chancellor, in the times of which we are speaking, had so many duties to fulfil, that he was a kind of prime minister, and was concerned in the despatch of every business of importance. The favour of the king added other profits and honours to those regularly belonging to the office of chancellor; and he gave the highest proof of confidence in Becket, by intrusting him with the education of his eldest son, prince Henry. His magnificent style of living corresponded with these great preferments. A number of knights were retained in his service; and, in one of Henry's wars, Becket accompanied him attended by seven hundred knights, maintained at his own expence. On another occasion, he supported for forty days, twelve hundred knights, and four thousand of their followers. His house was also a place of education for the sons of the chief nobility, and the king himself often condescended to be his guest†. One circumstance, which is mentioned by Fitz Stephens, the secretary of Becket, as a proof of his master's luxurious style of living, would be thought very strange at present. The apartments of the chancellor were, every day in winter, covered with clean straw or hay, and in

* Henry, *ib.* p. 242. † Hume, *ib.* p. 384, &c.

summer, with green rushes or boughs; lest the gentlemen who came to visit him, and who could not, on account of the great number of guests, find room to sit at the table, should soil their fine clothes by sitting on a dirty floor*.

LUCY.

That is strange indeed! I am sure I would far rather sit in our own snug parlour, than in Becket's grand, dirty hall. What an untidy thought it was, to cover the dirt, instead of cleaning the floor!

HARRY.

Why, if we were used to it, Lucy, we should like green rushes as well as carpets. If they were fresh every day, they must be clean. But in winter, when Becket's dining-room was fresh littered up, I really think it must have looked like a stable.

MRS. B.

I have read another story of Becket, which affords a picture of manners so different from those of our own times, that we should not believe it on slight authority. One day, as the king and the chancellor were riding together in the streets of London, they observed a beggar who was shivering with cold. "Would it not be very praise-worthy," said the king, "to give

* Hume, *ib.* p. 384, &c.

that poor man a warm coat in this severe season?" "It would, surely," replied the chancellor, "and you do well, Sir, in thinking of such good actions." "Then he shall have one presently!" cried the king; and seizing the skirt of Becket's scarlet coat, which was lined with ermine, he began to pull it violently. The chancellor resisted for some time, and both he and the king had like to have tumbled off their horses in the street. At length, after a great scuffle, Becket let go his coat, which the king bestowed upon the astonished beggar*.

LUCY.

I dare say he was astonished! But, mamma, how very rude the manners of that age must have been, if people did not think such actions beneath the dignity of a king.

[*She reads.*]

The confidence which Henry placed in Becket was so unlimited, that he seemed almost to share the throne with his sovereign. He possessed all the qualities that could most powerfully engage the affections of a prince, who had a judgment capable of discerning, and a heart formed to love extraordinary merit; but a temper which required some address and caution in those who approached him. Becket perfectly understood

* Hume *ib.* p. 385.

how to please the king; and while he made himself a perpetual companion to him, in most of his pleasures, he fell in with all the tastes of Henry so easily and so naturally, that in paying his court to that monarch, he seemed to be only indulging his own inclinations. The person and countenance of Becket were pleasing; his wit was lively and entertaining; his judgment acute, his eloquence flowing and sweet, his memory vast and ready on all occasions. The time he had passed in that school of policy, the court of Rome, had greatly improved and refined his understanding. There was also a certain inexpressible gracefulness in his manners; and thus gifted by nature, thus polished by art, his virtues appeared more amiable, while his vices were either concealed, or mistaken for those virtues which they most resembled*.

HARRY.

I do not understand that, mamma. How can virtue resemble vice?

MRS. B.

One essential character of virtue is *moderation:* dispositions in their nature commendable, cease to be virtuous if not restrained within just bounds. Thus, economy becomes avarice; prudence, timidity: and Becket's generosity and

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 322.

greatness of spirit, for want of being well regulated, degenerated into extravagance and ostentation. But while this son of a private citizen surpassed the greatest nobles in the splendour of his establishment, he had the art to persuade the king, that all this magnificence was designed only to do honour to his bountiful master*. Go on, Lucy; we shall soon find what dependence ought to be placed on the professions of a flatterer.

[*Lucy reads.*]

In the year 1161, while Henry was engaged in regulating his affairs in France, he lost a very affectionate friend and servant in England. This was Theobald, the old archbishop of Canterbury, who died in the month of April this year†. He had always been treated by the king with great regard, and had enjoyed a principal share in the administration. Whatever Theobald undertook, he pursued with an obstinate resolution, as king Stephen had sometimes found to his cost; but he was cordially attached to Henry, and being unwilling to disoblige him, he tried to keep the church and the government as quiet as he could. This was all that Henry desired, till the evils arising from the continual encroachments and unreasonable pretensions of

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 323. † *Ib.* vol. iii. p. 18.

the clergy, compelled him to attempt a reformation of those abuses.*

The good old archbishop being dead, it was a point of the utmost importance to the king, to consider who should fill that high station which had just become vacant. Henry had now resolved to restrain the licentiousness of the clergy, and to bring them under the authority of the laws: so that, when they committed crimes, they might be punished like the rest of his subjects. To assist him in this difficult work, he was desirous that the new archbishop should be a person on whose principles and affection he might depend: one who perfectly understood the rights of the state, and who would dare to support him in asserting those rights, against the immoderate pretensions of the pope†.

HARRY.

Will you explain this, mamma? What prevented wicked clergymen from being punished, as well as other criminals? and what could the pope have to do with the English government?

MRS. B.

In the times of the Anglo Saxons, causes which concerned the clergy, and those which concerned the *laity*, or people who were not clergymen, were all judged in the same courts.

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 306. † *Ib.* vol. iii. p. 19.

William the Conqueror made a separation between them; and after his reign, those causes which related to the church were decided by courts of churchmen, whose ambition soon excited them to invade the province of the civil magistrate*. These ecclesiastical courts never condemned any one to death, or inflicted any bodily punishment; so that those offenders who were brought before them were exempted from such sentences, unless, in a few cases, the church might be pleased to deliver the criminal to the civil magistrate for punishment. Thus robbery and murder were committed by the clergy with impunity†.

LUCY.

How shocking it was for people who pretended to teach others, to commit such crimes themselves! But you have not answered Harry's question about the pope, mamma.

MRS. B.

The pope then considered himself as the head of the whole Christian church: his power and influence were exerted, in order to withdraw the clergy of the various countries of Europe from subjection to their different sovereigns, and to render them dependent only on himself‡. Nor

* Henry, *ib.* p. 198; and Millar, vol. ii. p. 127—129.

† *Ib.* p. 139; and Henry, *ib.* p. 244. ‡ Millar, *ib.* p. 138.

was this all. He even dared to claim the power of forgiving sins, and of freeing people from the obligations arising from the most solemn promises.

HARRY.

What a wicked religion the pope's must have been!

MRS. B.

Rather say what a wicked *policy* it was, thus to make religion a pretence for the attainment of riches and power; and remember, that it was the gross ignorance and superstition of the age, which enabled the court of Rome to exert such unwarrantable authority. Let us now return to Henry, and see how he succeeded in his plan of correcting these abuses.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Henry thought that he saw in Becket all the qualities necessary for carrying on this important work. He therefore resolved to advance him to the vacant archbishopric, which Becket was himself anxious to obtain*. All the English bishops and clergy signified, as far as they durst, their disapprobation of this measure; and it is said that the Empress Matilda used all her influence to persuade her son to give up this design. But though Henry, upon other occa-

* Lyttelton, vol. iii. p. 20.

sions, paid the greatest respect to his mother's opinion, he determined, in this affair, to act from his own judgment. He believed himself in the right, but he was likely to be deceived, because he suffered his passions to be heated by the opposition he met with; and his affection for his favourite uniting with his pride, made him adhere to his purpose. He sent over Richard de Lucy from Normandy, to bear his royal mandate to the monks of Canterbury, and also to the bishops who were entitled to vote, that, without further deliberation, they should immediately elect his chancellor Becket to be their archbishop. "Richard," said he, before that minister set off, "if I were now lying dead, would you not endeavour to raise my eldest son to the throne?" Upon his answering that he would, to the utmost of his power, the king replied, "Endeavour equally to raise my chancellor Becket to the see of Canterbury." The minister departed, and accomplished his master's purpose, no one any longer daring to oppose it; but when the election was over, the bishop of Hereford ventured to say, that "*the king had worked a miracle, in having that day turned a layman and a soldier into an archbishop**."

* Lyttelton, vol. iii. p. 25—29.

LUCY.

Was Becket's being a layman the reason why the clergy opposed his election?

MRS. B.

I think it appears so. They were accustomed to think of him as a courtier and a statesman, and probably feared that he would promote the designs of his master against the power of the church. Let us hear whether such apprehensions were well-founded.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The abuse of power on the part of the clergy was now become so enormous, that the voice of the people called loudly for a redress of the grievances it occasioned. The authority of Henry was firmly established. The circumstances of the court of Rome afforded a favourable opportunity for the attempt; but an obstacle arose, which broke all the measures which the king's policy had suggested, and involved him in unforeseen difficulties. The partner of his most secret counsels; the man whom he loved and trusted above all others; that very Becket whom he had made archbishop of Canterbury, chiefly with a view of being assisted by him in this design—set himself to oppose it with the most invincible obstinacy.

No change could be more sudden and violent than that which took place in Becket, immediately after his election. From the gayest and

to comply, though evidently with great reluctance*.

In the month of April, 1163, Pope Alexander the Third held a general council at Tours, at which the archbishop of Canterbury was present, and was treated with extraordinary honours by the pope and cardinals, who knew that vanity and the love of admiration were his prevailing passions†. Alexander judged well for the interest of the church, in paying this court to Becket, whose pride was increased by it, and, together with his pride, his zeal for the exaltation of the clergy. A close connexion between him and the pope, most injurious to the designs of Henry, was the consequence of this meeting; and the other English bishops who attended it, imbibed something of the same spirit. So dangerous was it, in an age when the church was so much corrupted, for ambitious priests to have an opportunity of caballing together, and forming plans which made religion a pretext for the extension of their power‡.

When Becket returned to England, he began to carry his schemes into practice, with all the violence natural to a man of his temper. He claimed the lands of several English barons,

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 6—8. † Henry, *ib.* p. 243.
‡ Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 9, 10.

on pretence that they had once belonged to the see of Canterbury; particularly the castle of Tunbridge, though it had been granted by William the Conqueror to the great-grand-father of the earl who then possessed it, in whose family it had quietly remained for so many years: but the archbishop contended that no grant could be good against the claim of the church. This alarmed all the nobility, who did not know how far that haughty priest might choose to extend his claims. The king himself was not safe in his own property; for Becket pretended the same right to certain castles and manors belonging to the generous master whom he had so unworthily deceived*.

There was another subject, on which nothing could be more opposite than the views of the king and the primate. The former was determined to be the sovereign of all his subjects, clergy as well as laity—to oblige them to obey the laws, or to answer for their disobedience in his courts of justice; and though he now perceived too plainly, that the man on whom he had depended for assistance in this important and difficult work, was about to become his most determined adversary, he was not on that ac-

* Lyttelton, p. 11, &c.

count inclined to relinquish his project. Indeed, the conduct of Becket rendered the necessity of reformation still more apparent; for about this time some clergymen were guilty of crimes to which the laws assigned the punishment of death. One of them had committed murder, under circumstances of peculiar aggravation, and the king demanded that he should be brought to trial for the crime. This was resisted by Becket, who continued obstinately to protect the offender. Henry, perceiving that this excited general indignation, availed himself of the moment when the feelings of his people were so favourable to the design he meditated, and summoned all the bishops to attend him at Westminster, where he weightily and vehemently declared the reasons which had induced him to call them together; and concluded by requiring them to consent, that ecclesiastics who were proved guilty of any heinous crime, should first be degraded from the rank they held in the church, and then be immediately delivered up to the proper officers, to be tried for the offence in a court of justice*.

The king spoke in general terms, yet Becket was conscious that what he said had a particular reference to some of his late proceedings. He

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 14—16.

likewise knew that the people in general, and even many of the clergy, had been displeased at his conduct. He dreaded the effect which the king's speech might have on the bishops who were present; and he thought that if they returned an immediate answer, while the impression was strong on their minds, they would agree to what Henry had proposed. He therefore earnestly endeavoured to put off the decision till the next morning. To this the king would not consent; but he allowed Becket to hold a private conference with the bishops, in which he so successfully exerted his uncommon powers of address and persuasion, that he brought them all over to his own opinion, and they unanimously joined with him in declaring it to the king.

Henry reasoned with them for some time, till, finding them obstinate, he desisted from argument, and asked them this plain question: *Whether they would observe the ancient customs and laws of his realm?*

Becket, after consulting with his brethren, replied, that he would observe those laws and customs, *as far as he could, saving the privileges of his order, and the honour of God.* Every one of the bishops being asked the same question, answered in the same words. The king, extremely provoked at this evasion, from

which none but the bishop of Chichester could be brought to depart, said, *He perceived that a line of battle was drawn up against him*, and abruptly left the assembly. The next morning he took from Becket the government of his son, and the custody of those castles which had been committed to him when chancellor. The loss of these was not agreeable to the primate; but he was particularly mortified to see the young prince taken out of his hands, before he had time to make any lasting impression on the tender mind which he anxiously desired to mould to his purposes*.

HARRY.

But the king was quite in the right; and I am heartily glad that he has taken the little prince away from Becket, for I am sure he would teach him to be disobedient to his father.

MRS. B.

I am glad that you feel particular satisfaction just at the time it is convenient to break off. We will resume the story of Becket another evening.

LUCY.

I think it is not likely that any body could have been deceived by Becket's professions of

* Lyttelton, *ib.* to p. 18.

zeal for religion, when his conduct showed so plainly, that it was the power and riches of this world he was anxious to obtain.

HARRY.

I tell you, Lucy, there were much worse things in the character of Becket, than the love of riches and power. With all his parade of generosity, depend upon it he was a mean, shabby fellow in his heart. If he had been honourable, he would have scorned to accept of the archbishopric without explaining his own opinions to the king.

MRS. B.

Had he done so, the king would never have made him archbishop; and Becket would have lost a most favourable opportunity of promoting the interests of the clergy, and exalting the power of the pope, who was then considered as the head of the whole Christian church.

HARRY.

It would have been far better to do his duty, like an honest man. I hate such ingratitude and deceit; and for my part, I think that the pope and Becket were both very bad men.

MRS. B.

Very *mistaken* men, I grant, Harry. I wish my dear boy, you could understand that distinction! you would then feel compassion for the errors of those, whose misfortune it was to

live in an ignorant and superstitious age. It was no peculiar fault of Alexander or of Becket, to view the exaltation of papal power, and the advancement of religion, as being necessarily united. It was a general delusion; and long before either of them were born, artful, ambitious men had "made the word of God of no effect through their traditions, by teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

LUCY.

But the delusion seems to have been confined to the clergy, mamma. You see that Henry the Second judged very reasonably, and your story says that the conduct of Becket excited *general indignation.*

MRS. B.

You should recollect, that the pretensions of Becket tended to subvert the moral and civil rights both of king and people; and by protecting the clergy, even when guilty of atrocious crimes, to subject the whole nation to the most odious tyranny. It would have been strange indeed, if they had not resisted such encroachments! But I assure you, that Henry, though one of the wisest and most politic princes of his time, was far from having just notions of papal power, or clear conceptions of the nature of true religion.

HARRY.

What, was Henry no better than the rest of them, when I had pleased myself with thinking that he was quite another Alfred! Why do you think that he had not just notions of papal power?

MRS. B.

Because he was willing to acknowledge the unreasonable claims of the pope, when doing so favoured the purposes of his own ambition. In the second year of his reign, Henry was desirous of attempting the conquest of Ireland. It does not appear that he even pretended any right to the possession of that country; but he obtained a grant of it from Pope Adrian the Fourth, as a sanction to the enterprise*.

HARRY.

Did Ireland belong to the pope at that time, mamma?

MRS. B.

You might very naturally suppose so, since he took the liberty of disposing of it; but the pope had no other right to Ireland than this: he said that "*all islands which have received the Christian faith, belong of right to St. Peter, and the Most Holy Roman Church.*" By

* Henry, *ib.* p. 99, and 240.

accepting this grant, Henry plainly acknowledged that the pope had a right to deprive the Irish princes of their dominions, and to give them to another. A king of England ought never to have countenanced so absurd and dangerous a pretension; but the wisest princes are sometimes so blinded by ambition, as not to perceive the most obvious consequences of their conduct*.

HARRY.

Indeed Henry did put himself in check completely! If the pope's assertion was true with respect to Ireland, it must be equally true with respect to England. Oh, I quite give him up about the papal power! he was very unjust, and very short-sighted into the bargain. But his mistake about the nature of religion. Can I understand that, mamma?

MRS. B.

I will tell you one of his mistakes, and then you may judge. Nearly three years after the circumstance I have just related, a company of about thirty men and women appeared in England, and soon attracted attention by the singularity of their religious practices and opinions. One part of the tyranny of the church of Rome, consisted in not allowing people to worship God

* Henry, *ib.*

in the manner that was most agreeable to their own feelings, but insisting that every one should conform to the established customs of the church, whether they approved of them or not. This little company was therefore brought before a council of the clergy at Oxford, where they were questioned respecting their religion. Their teacher answered in the name of the rest, that *they were Christians, and believed the doctrines of the apostles.* It was, however, found, on further inquiry, that they denied some of the traditions of the Romish church. Now, though the clergy would protect thieves and murderers, they delivered these poor people up to punishment, because they happened to differ from themselves in matters of opinion. I am sorry to be obliged to add, that Henry lent the sanction of his high authority to this transaction; and, at the desire of bigoted and cruel priests, he commanded these unfortunate persons to be branded on the forehead with a red-hot iron, to be whipped through the streets of Oxford, and then to be turned half naked into the open fields. All persons were forbidden, under the severest penalties, to afford them any shelter or relief. This shameful sentence was rigorously executed: it happened to be the depth of winter, and all these poor creatures perished with cold and hunger. While we admire the many great

and amiable qualities of Henry, we must ever lament that his reign should afford the first example recorded in English history, of death inflicted on account of religious opinion*. I think this story is sufficient to convince you, that Henry shared the ignorance of the times in which he lived, and that he had but a very imperfect acquaintance with that religion, which asserts the right of "every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind."

HARRY.

Mamma, I have no patience with this! the most cruel tyrant could not have behaved worse than Henry Plantagenet; and I liked him so much, and pitied him in his troubles with Becket. It is very disagreeable to have one's good opinion of people unsettled!

MRS. B.

Then do not hastily form a general opinion from particular facts. You know that Henry the Second possessed many great and excellent qualities; but you should not, therefore, conclude that he was free from faults, or that he was not liable to be influenced by the prevailing errors of the times. He generally acted like a wise and good king; but he was Matilda's son, and some traces of her character were perceptible. He

* Henry ii. p. 241,

was ambitious, and his passions were not well regulated; for, upon any sudden provocation, he could not command the first emotions of rage, though at other times he was remarkable for prudence and judgment. Yet anger never betrayed him into furious or cruel actions; nor did it last long, but only broke out in hasty words or gestures. His general disposition was gentle and humane, tenderly compassionate towards persons in distress, whose necessities his good economy provided an ample fund for relieving*. His treatment of the poor sufferers at Oxford, is wholly unlike the rest of his character, and can only be accounted for by his ignorance of the true spirit of Christianity.

But let us now return to Becket, who seemed on the point of becoming the declared enemy of his master. It is your turn to read, my dear boy.

[*Harry reads.*]

The English nobles, who were justly alarmed by the unreasonable claims of Becket, strongly represented to the king, "how much it would dishonour his character, if he, who exceeded all his predecessors in power, should reign less worthily, or act more remissly than they had

* Lyttelton, vol. iii. p. 35, &c.

done, in defending the dignity and rights of his crown." Henry did not need these instigations: he was already sufficiently resolved to maintain his royal prerogatives with the necessary spirit and firmness, but he proceeded as one who wished to conquer by art rather than by force. Finding that the bishops were restrained from compliance, only by a fear of incurring the censures of the court of Rome, for discovering less zeal for its interests than was manifested by the archbishop, his whole policy was exerted in trying to overcome the obstinacy of Becket. He threatened, he entreated; he even flattered the man whom he once had loved, but now hated. It was all in vain. Becket was conscious, notwithstanding Henry's apparent kindness, that he had for ever lost his place in the affections of his sovereign. He therefore continued inflexible, and neither threats nor allurements had any effect on the natural intrepidity of his mind, which, from the beginning of this dispute, had determined to brave all the consequences with which it might be attended. In vain did his friends remind him of the respect due to the king; in vain did they set before him the ingratitude of his conduct, or the dangers which his obstinacy might bring on the kingdom as well as on himself. He answered by pleading his zeal for the church, which freed him from

all other duties, and cancelled all other obligations*.

LUCY.

I am sure that zeal for the church must have been a very bad thing, if it made men rebellious and ungrateful.

[*Harry reads.*]

At length the earnest entreaties of his friends produced some effect. Becket began to yield, and waiting upon the king at Oxford, he consented to promise obedience to the laws of the land, without annexing to this promise, as he had always done before, a saving of the privileges of his order†. Henry received him with apparent satisfaction, but not with his former confidence: neither would he content himself with a simple promise, but soon afterwards called a parliament to meet him at Clarendon. In this parliament the rights of the crown, and the customs of the realm, particularly with regard to courts of justice, which had been in force under the government of king Henry the First, being still fresh in the memory of the oldest persons present, were set down in writing; and it was desired that the whole assembly should take an oath to observe them. Becket objected to this, as a very different thing from

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 19—21. † Henry, *ib.* p. 245.

the general promise which he had given. The king and the nobles were justly offended at this unexpected opposition; since it proved that Becket had intended to impose upon the king, by making a promise which he did not mean to keep. The most violent debates between the bishops and the barons, were the consequence of this obstinacy and duplicity. At length, the tears and entreaties of two of his particular friends appeared to make some impression on the haughty primate, and in the hearing of all the bishops he uttered these remarkable words: "*It is my master's pleasure that I forswear myself; and at present I submit to it, and do resolve to incur a perjury, and repent afterwards as I may.*" The bishops heard him with astonishment and indignation; yet they went with him to the king and barons in parliament, to whom Becket declared that he consented to the regulations which had been drawn up, and promised, "*in the word of truth, that he would observe them in good faith, and without deceit.*" When Becket had taken the oath in the usual form, he commanded the other bishops, by the obedience which they owed him, to make the same engagement, which they all did in the same words. They then signed the articles, and set their seals to them, except

Becket, who refused to confirm his oath by that ceremony*.

HARRY.

How silly those bishops were, not to tell the king that Becket was going to take a false oath!

MRS. B.

The bishops appear to have been influenced by the fear of offending Becket, whose favour with the pope they believed sufficient to protect him from the consequences of Henry's displeasure. It is a very striking proof of the corruption of religion, in the times of which we are reading, that a man who held the highest station in the English church, should deliberately make a promise which he never intended to keep, and afterwards confirm that promise by a solemn oath, taken with the avowed intention of forswearing himself!

HARRY.

It was a strange affair altogether; and I cannot imagine why, since Becket neither minded lying nor swearing falsely, he should be so scrupulous about *signing* the paper. Can you explain it, mamma?

MRS. B.

Not unless it arose from that irresolution and

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 22—26.

timidity which usually accompany a sense of guilt. Probably he already began to feel that remorse which is the certain punishment of vice, in minds that are not completely hardened, and was vainly seeking for excuses, a little to palliate a crime, which not only degraded him in his own estimation, but in the eyes of others. His refusal to sign did not, however, mend his case, because the consent he had given to the articles is expressly declared in the preamble, or introduction to the act; which was, certainly, as strong a testimony against him as his signature could have been; especially since Becket received one copy of the act himself, another was delivered to the care of the archbishop of York, and a third retained by the king; so that the certain knowledge of the engagement he had made was effectually secured*. If you are satisfied with this explanation, my dear boy, you had better proceed with your story.

[*Harry reads.*]

The famous act which Becket thus obstinately refused to sign, is known by the name of *the Constitutions of Clarendon*. The regulations it contained were in all respects wise and just, but were so evidently calculated to put a stop to the encroachments of the church of Rome,

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 26.

and to set bounds to the extravagant pretensions of the English clergy, that they were equally odious to both; and though the pope was under great obligations to Henry, that monarch could never prevail upon him to sanction them*.

Becket had now another part to play. As it was with evident reluctance that he had sworn to obey the Constitutions of Clarendon, he soon began to give signs of repenting the step he had taken. This appeared by extraordinary acts of mortification, and by refraining from the discharge of his sacred duties, as if he judged himself unworthy to fulfil them. He also dispatched a messenger with an account of what had passed to the pope, who sent him a bull, releasing him from the obligation he had incurred by his oath, and commanding him to resume the exercise of his sacred duties.

HARRY.

Why, mamma, if the pope did such things as that, it was enough to destroy all confidence among men! But why did he send Becket *a bull?* Was that one of the odd customs of those times?

MRS. B.

The word *bull* is there used in a sense which is new to you. It was the name given to the

* Henry, *ib.* p. 246.

edicts of the pope, and derived from the word *bulla*, which signifies a seal. The bulls of the popes were letters written on parchment, to which a leaden seal was attached, sometimes by threads of silk, and sometimes by hempen cord: properly speaking, it was this pendant lead, or seal, which was the bull, and it was this which gave authority to the writing. One side of the seal represented the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul; on the other was impressed the name of the pope, and the year of his pontificate*.

HARRY.

I understand that very well. I have seen some of those pendant seals on papa's old parchments, but they were great lumps of wax. I never heard of leaden seals before. Why did the pope seal with lead, mamma?

MRS. B.

Sealing with *metals* was a privilege belonging only to princes: when used by prelates, it was because they were considered as princes of the church†. But go on, my dear; let us know whether the pope's bull produced any change in the feelings or situation of Becket.

[*Harry reads.*]

The conscience of the primate was by this means reconciled to the violation of his oath:

* Chambers's Dict. Art. BULL. † *Ib.*

another proof of his imperfect sense of religious and moral obligations. It was not, however, in the power of the pope to remove his fears of the just indignation of his sovereign, and he resolved to retire privately out of the kingdom*. To do this without the king's permission, was expressly forbidden by the Constitutions of Clarendon; but Becket now professed to think, that to disregard those statutes which he had sworn to observe, was an act of religion. He did not intend to abandon the cause in which he was engaged, but supposed he should serve it more advantageously abroad, than by remaining in England, exposed to the power and resentment of Henry. Twice he attempted to put to sea, but was driven back by contrary winds, and returned to Canterbury†. The king was very glad to hear that this enterprise had failed, for he was then in such circumstances, that an enemy, who, like Becket, knew all the secrets of his foreign affairs, could injure him more abroad than in England. Therefore, when the archbishop waited upon him at his palace of Woodstock, he received him with great mildness. Becket, however, perceived that the king's resolution to support the authority of the laws remained firm; and being persuaded of this, he chose rather to

* Henry, *ib.* p. 246. † Lyttelton vol. iv. p 38, &c.

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* Henry, *ib.* p. 246. † Lyttelton vol. iv. p 38, &c.

begin the attack than to wait for it. He therefore openly opposed the laws enacted at Clarendon, protected churchmen who had offended against them, and, by his whole conduct, evinced a deliberate purpose to exalt the power of the church above that of the laws and the sovereign. All the nobles were alarmed, and some of Henry's counsellors told him in plain terms, that "*if he did not take care of himself and his successors, it would come to that pass, that he whom the clergy should elect would be king, and only so long as it should please the archbishop.*" Henry, with his usual prudence, waited for an occasion of noticing the proceedings of Becket in a proper and legal manner*. Such an opportunity soon presented itself. The archbishop refused, though required by the king, to do justice to a great officer of the household, who claimed an estate from the church of Canterbury: that nobleman appealed to Henry, who sent an order to Becket to appear before him on a certain day. The archbishop answered this summons by an express declaration *that he would not obey it.* This appeared such an insult to the royal dignity, that it was thought proper to bring the primate before the high court of parliament, to answer for this offence, and several others with

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 40, &c.

which he was charged by the crown. A parliament was therefore summoned to meet at Northampton, on the 17th of October, 1164. This council was uncommonly full, as the whole nation was deeply interested in the contest. On the first day of the sitting, Henry in person accused the archbishop, but in very moderate terms, of the contempt which he had shown for his authority. Becket made but a weak defence, and was unanimously found guilty, by the bishops as well as by the barons*. Other charges were afterwards preferred against him, and he showed such open contempt of the king and the parliament, that he was at length accused and found guilty of perjury and treason. Becket then denied the right of the king, the bishops, and other peers of the realm, to judge *his* conduct; and appealing to the pope he left the hall, with many haughty and insulting expressions. Henry, fearing that the barons might be excited by their indignation to some act of violence, issued a proclamation forbidding all persons, on pain of death, to do the archbishop or his people any harm. Presently after he received a message from that prelate, by three of the bishops, requesting leave to go out of the kingdom. The king answered, that he would consult upon it with his council the next day.

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 41; and Henry, *ib.* p. 247.

It was, however, far from the intention of Becket, to leave this point to be decided either by the council or the king. The better to conceal his real design, or to appear as if, notwithstanding Henry's proclamation, some danger threatened his person, he ordered a bed to be made for him in the church, between two altars, as if he supposed that the holiness of the place would protect him from the rage of his enemies. At midnight he arose, and passed through a back door of the convent, attended by two monks. One of them, named Herbert de Boseham, has written an account of the life of Becket, from which the following particulars of his flight are taken*.

HARRY.

I am very glad of that! I like particularly to read accounts written by people who were engaged in the very actions they describe. This is the reason why Xenophon's account of the Retreat of the Ten Thousand never tires me, though I have read it so often.

MRS. B.

This circumstance of Becket's life is very slightly mentioned by several historians†. As I know that you are fond of escapes, I selected the account we are going to read, as the most

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 42—57. † By Hume, Henry, & Turner.

entertaining: it probably is so, for the reason you have mentioned, because Herbert de Boseham himself shared the difficulties which he describes. Now, my dear, read us Becket's escape, as well as you can.

[*Harry reads.*]

It does not appear how the fugitives got out of Northampton, which was then a walled town; but instead of directing their course immediately to a sea-port, they rode northwards to Lincoln, probably thinking themselves less likely to be pursued in that direction. Thence Becket proceeded by water to a hermitage in the fens, near forty miles from that city, where, being secured from discovery by the solitude of the place, he rested for three days; then, turning to the south-east, he travelled on foot in the habit of a monk. He pursued his journey during the night, and rested all day in the different monasteries he passed, till he came to Estrey in Kent, a manor belonging to the priory of Canterbury, and not far from that city. There he remained for eight days, concealed in the chamber of a priest, who was the only inhabitant of Estrey intrusted with the secret. In the mean time, Herbert de Boseham and two other monks went to Sandwich, a town near the mouth of the river Stour, to procure

a fishing-boat, in which Becket embarked with them, a little before day-break, on the 10th of November, being the fifteenth day after his escape from Northampton *.

As soon as Henry was informed of the flight of the archbishop, he gave orders to watch the sea-ports, particularly Dover; so that if Becket had gone immediately to the coast, he would probably have been taken. And, lest this precaution should prove ineffectual, a splendid embassy, consisting of many of the chief nobility, was sent to the king of France, and to the pope, Alexander the Third, who then resided at Sens, a town in Champagne. The ambassadors were also directed to visit the earl of Flanders in their way, and deliver him a letter, complaining of Becket as having fled from justice, and desiring the earl not to afford him protection in any part of his country. They were intrusted with a similar letter to the French king. It so happened that these ambassadors crossed from Dover to Calais, at the very time when Becket was sailing from Sandwich to Flanders. As he had not been heard of for some days in England, the king's officers concluded that he had already made his escape; and this opinion rendered them less watchful, than when they

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 57.

first received orders to guard the ports, a circumstance which greatly favoured his departure. The earl of Flanders was sufficiently inclined to afford protection to the fugitive archbishop, but he was restrained from appearing as his friend, on account of the great obligations he owed to Henry, who, some years before, had proved himself a faithful guardian of the person and territories of the youthful earl, who had been committed to his care, while his father and mother were gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land*.

To protect a subject while flying from justice, was so manifestly inconsistent with the respect and gratitude which the earl of Flanders owed to Henry for such important services, that Becket, though assured that the secret feelings of the earl were in his favour, did not venture to claim any avowed protection; but seems to have been desirous of passing undiscovered through his dominions, and acted with as much caution as if he had been in an enemy's country. When the little fishing-boat approached Gravelines, the archbishop was fearful of entering the harbour, where he might have been subject to a troublesome examination: he was therefore

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 62—64; and Henry, *ib.* p. 88.

set on shore about three miles from that town, and once more resumed his wanderings on foot, through deep roads, and a great storm of wind and rain. He had not yet recovered the sickness occasioned by his voyage, and his exertions so greatly overcame his strength, that he laid himself down on the ground, cold and wet as it was, and declared that he could not walk any further. His attendants then, by some means, procured a horse, but without either bridle or saddle. Becket supplied these deficiences, as well as he could, by a halter, and some clothes belonging to the three monks who accompanied him. Thus accoutred he rode to Gravelines, and, calling himself Friar Christian, he stopped at an inn in that town. While he was at supper, the innkeeper observing him attentively, suspected who he was; for the report of his flight already prevailed in Flanders. These suspicions the good man of the house imparted to his wife, who confirmed them by some observations of her own. They accordingly began to treat Friar Christian with a respect which made him very uneasy. To persuade them that he really was what he appeared to be, he invited his host to sit at table with him, but the artifice did not succeed; for he seated himself with great humility at Becket's feet, and said to him, "My lord, I return

thanks to God, that I have been thought worthy of receiving you under my roof." "Why, who am I," replied Becket, "am not I a poor monk?" "No," said the host, "you may call yourself what you please; but I know you to be a great man, and archbishop of Canterbury." Though it was dangerous to trust a stranger, Becket thought it yet more dangerous to persist in a reserve which would probably be useless; he therefore declared himself to the innkeeper, with a frankness and confidence which secured his fidelity. The archbishop passed the night without any further discovery; and for fear that the next day might produce some change in the feelings of his host, he took him with him to be his guide to St. Omer's. They arrived at that place late in the evening, and the cautious Becket, instead of entering the town, went to a neighbouring monastery, where he learned that the ambassadors sent by king Henry had come that day to St. Omer's, and were lodged in the castle. Not wishing to remain so near them, he removed in the night to a hermitage which had belonged to St. Bertin, a very solitary place, surrounded by waters. Here he remained concealed for three days and nights, attended by only one of the monks, having ordered the two others to watch the motions of the English ambassadors, who left

St. Omer's the morning after Becket had retired to the hermitage. On the fourth day, being informed that he might come without danger, he went to the abbey of St. Bertin, where he was received with great respect and affection*.

LUCY.

It was a remarkable escape, certainly; but I cannot feel so much interest in it, as if Becket had been a better man.

HARRY.

At any rate, you must own that he managed his escape very cleverly, and showed a great deal of prudence, and ingenuity, and presence of mind. Oh, I thought it was all over with him, when the innkeeper told him he was the archbishop of Canterbury! I am afraid I should not have thought of trusting the man; but I see it was the best way.

MRS. B.

You know we have heard that Becket was eminently skilled in the art of managing the tempers, and influencing the actions of men. His ambitious, intriguing character rendered the frequent exertion of those arts necessary, for which a life of plain integrity affords but few opportunities.

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 65—67.

[*Harry reads.*]

The two monks, having followed the ambassadors from St. Omer's to the court of France, were received very kindly by the king, who promised his favour and protection to their fugitive master. When the ambassadors proceeded to Sens, in order to wait on the pope, these monks followed them thither also, and were first admitted to an audience. Herbert de Boseham, who appears to have been the orator on this occasion, addressed the pope thus: "Holy Father, your son Joseph no longer reigns in Egypt, but the Egyptians have almost killed him, and forced him to flee." When he proceeded to describe the persecutions which his master had endured in England, and the toils and dangers of his escape, the pope burst into tears, exclaiming: "And doth your master still live! He may claim the glory of a martyr, though he is in the flesh*."

LUCY.

I think that both Herbert and the pope represented this affair very unjustly.

MRS. B.

You see, that all through the business, it was Becket's aim to make the furtherance of his own ambitious views appear to be essential to

* Henry, *ib.* p. 252, &c.

the interest of the church. Let us hear how he proceeded.

[*Harry reads.*]

As soon as Becket was assured of the favourable reception which his messengers had received, he set out for Soissons, where the French king then resided, who paid him the first visit, and received him in the most affectionate manner. After spending three days at Soissons, the archbishop departed for Sens with a numerous retinue, entered that town in a kind of triumph, and was received with the greatest respect and kindness by the pope.

The next day a solemn council was held, in which Becket was placed on the pope's right hand, and desired to explain his cause without rising from his seat*. His speech was very artful, setting forth how much his conduct had been against his own interest, and how his regard for his sacred profession had deprived him of the king's affections; which, even *now*, it was in his power to regain, by abandoning the cause of the church. But seeing that the church of Canterbury, which in times past had been *the western sun*, was now obscured in its brightness, he chose rather to endure a thousand deaths, than dissemble the evils which it suffered.

* Henry, *ib.* p. 254.

Then, producing his copy of the Constitutions of Clarendon, he said with tears, "See here, what laws the king of England has ordained against the liberties of the church! Be judges yourselves, whether, without the perdition of my soul, I could possibly connive at such matters as these*!"

The Constitutions were then read, and the council unanimously declared, that the cause of the archbishop was the cause of God and of the church, and that he ought to be supported†.

MRS. B.

And now that the politic archbishop has succeeded in obtaining this declaration, we will leave off reading for the present. To-morrow, my dear Lucy, I hope you will entertain us with the remainder of the story. We shall then hear whether the talents of Becket, supported by the power of the pope, were more than a match for the spirit and independence of Henry Plantagenet.

"Come, dear Lucy," said Harry, "I wish you would make haste, and settle down com-

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 82. † Henry, *ib.* p. 255.

fortably. I will finish winding that silk if you will begin to read, for it is your turn now."

LUCY.

Have you not settled in your own mind, whether Henry or Becket will prove victorious?

HARRY.

No, I cannot settle it: I do not believe either of them will give up; but I wish Henry may succeed, because he is in the right.

Lucy then continued the story of Becket as follows:

It would be tedious to relate the intrigues which were carried on for several years by this artful and ambitious man, against a sovereign whose perseverance equalled his own, and whose honour and generosity were infinitely superior. All his powers of persuasion and of flattery, were exerted to secure the favourable interposition of the empress Matilda, whose influence over her son, the primate desired to turn to his own advantage. His wishes were supported by the request of the pope, at whose solicitation Matilda undertook the office of mediatrix. The negociation was, however, put an end to by her death, which took place at Rouen, in the year 1167. In the early part of Matilda's life, her pride and violence of temper dishonoured her

character, and made her appear, both to her friends and enemies, unfit to fill that high station to which she was raised; but, from the instructions of adversity, and the influence of age and reflection, she learned the virtues she most wanted, moderation and mildness. When the natural elevation and vigour of her mind was thus directed and restrained, she became a most useful counsellor and minister to her son, who intrusted her with the government of Normandy. History does not, perhaps, afford another instance of a woman who had possessed such high dignities, and encountered such imminent dangers for the sake of power, being afterwards content to give it up, and, without forsaking the world, to live quietly in it; neither joining in cabals against the state, nor aspiring to rule it beyond that limited province which was assigned to her administration*. Without ever having made a formal cession of her right to the crown in favour of her son, her true affection for him appears to have effectually restrained her ambition: while his confidence in that affection, seems to have rendered him perfectly content with her simple acquiescence†.

Matilda conferred many important benefits on the city of Rouen during her life, and left by

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 157—166. † *Ib.* vol. ii. p. 280, &c.

her will, large sums of money for religious and charitable purposes, which Henry paid, according to her directions, with most exact and honourable fidelity. When he had performed that duty, and seen the body of his mother interred, as she had desired that it might be, in the abbey of Bec, he sought a remedy for his grief, by renewing his attention to the duties of his station*.

LUCY.

I like that account of Matilda: it explains what puzzled me. I could not think how it was that Henry paid so much respect to her opinion; for you know, when she was in England, she was so conceited and ill-tempered, that she threw all her affairs into confusion just when she was going to be made queen.

MRS. B.

Yes, but you see she grew wise by experience; and I think it appears as if her strong affection for her son, became the means of her reformation. After soothing her own disappointed ambition, by the hopes of Henry's future greatness, and devoting all her cares to the completion of his education, it was natural to suppose, that when the death of Stephen opened his way to the throne, Matilda would have

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 167.

returned with him to England, to share the power and splendour of royalty. But she was conscious of not being loved by the English, and fearful that her presence might, therefore, be injurious to her son, she determined to remain in Normandy*. To an ambitious mind like hers, this must have been a great sacrifice; and her generous affection was rewarded, as it deserved, by the most sincere respect and filial tenderness†; blessings more valuable than all which Matilda had resigned.

HARRY.

Mother, do you think it happier to have a good son, than to be a powerful monarch.

MRS. B.

I would rather have such a son, my dear boy, than be empress of all the Russias! But let your sister go on with our story: when it is finished, I will ask you a question.

[*Lucy reads.*]

On the 6th of January, 1169, an interview took place at Montmirail, between the kings of France and England; and thither Becket was conducted by two abbots, who had taken great pains to prevail on him to conciliate his offended sovereign. Their well-meant endeavours, being seconded by the king of France and all the

* Lyttelton, vol. ii. p. 280. † *Ib.* p. 195.

princes and prelates who were present, at length prevailed. When Becket was introduced to Henry, he fell on his knees and said, "I submit myself to the mercy of God and the king—to the honour of God and the king." These expressions were artfully intended to conciliate, without conveying any distinct meaning. Henry, too penetrating to be so easily imposed on, insisted that Becket should promise in plain words, "that he would obey those laws and customs, which the holy archbishops of Canterbury had obeyed in the times of former kings, and which he had solemnly sworn to obey." This Becket refused; but the king continuing to insist upon it, many of the nobles and bishops present, vehemently urged him to comply, and he at last consented to make the required promise, *with a saving of the honour of God, and of the rights of his order.* The king, well knowing what was intended by these savings, rejected such a compliance; and addressing himself to the king of France, said, in an affecting manner: "My liege lord, I earnestly entreat your attention. I know that whatever happens to displease him, he will say is contrary to the honour of God, and the rights of his order. But that it may appear to all the world that I do not oppose the honour of God, or the real rights of his order, I here make this offer. There have been many kings of

England before me, some weaker and others greater than I am. There have been also many great and holy men archbishops of Canterbury before him: let him behave towards me, as the greatest and most holy of his predecessors behaved towards the weakest of mine, and I am satisfied." This speech had a great effect on those present, who cried out, that the king's concessions were sufficient. The archbishop still remaining silent, the king of France exclaimed, "My lord archbishop! why do you hesitate? Peace is now in your offer." Becket, with invincible obstinacy, still adhered to his former conditions: the earnest entreaties of his friends, and the threats of his enemies, were alike unavailing, and the conference ended without producing any favourable effect*.

At length, on the 22d of July, 1170, a formal reconcilation took place between the king and the primate. Again the superior moderation and generosity of Henry were apparent: he graciously received all the persons who had followed Becket into exile; and having thus publicly forgiven all who had provoked his resentment in the late dispute, he desired that the archbishop would, in like manner, declare his forgiveness of all those who had in-

* Henry, *ib.* p. 265, &c.

curred his displeasure. To this most reasonable proposal, the artful prelate, who meditated revenge against all his adversaries, returned an evasive answer, only promising in general, that if any of them failed to obtain forgiveness, it would be by his own fault*.

All the necessary arrangements being made, Becket set out on his return to England, again to take possession of his archbishopric. He crossed the channel on the first of December, landed at Sandwich, and proceeded to Canterbury. On the road he was met by multitudes of poor people, who spread their clothes in the way, singing, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." This scene flattered the vanity, and does not appear to have shocked the feelings of Becket, who, by this application of Scripture, was so profanely and absurdly compared to the meek and holy Jesus. The pageantry was closed by the monks of Canterbury, who received him into their convent with the ringing of bells, with the music of organs, and with hymns of praise to the Almighty. He was so much elated with these extravagant and impious honours, that he could not help boasting of them in his letter to the pope. "I was received," said he, "with great devotion, by

* Henry, *ib.* p. 272, &c.

the clergy and the people." But this was a dangerous mistake: he took *the mob* for *the people.* Hence he presumed upon an influence which he did not really possess, and nourished that insolence which proved his destruction*.

HARRY.

Oh! then he did come to a violent end at last! Well, I am sure it was no wonder; but go on, Lucy, I want to hear how it happened.

[*Lucy reads.*]

While Becket was waiting at Whitsand, in Flanders, for a fair wind to cross the Channel, he found means to send over three bulls to England; one for suspending or preventing the archbishop of York from the exercise of his official duties; the other two for excommunicating the bishops of London and Salisbury†. The sentence of excommunication was greatly dreaded, even by the most powerful princes of those times; and the prelates in question sent agents to wait on Becket and demand their absolution. This request was refused, and the bishops therefore resolved to go over into Normandy, where the king then was, in order to implore his protection against the violence of the primate.

In the mean time, the archbishop was visited

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 346—343 † Henry, *ib.* p. 274.

by few persons of rank or consideration, and every thing seemed to threaten him with very ill-consequences, from the imprudence of his conduct: but amidst the fears of his friends, he alone appeared undaunted, and even seemed to act as if he desired to suffer martyrdom, in support of those privileges for which he had so earnestly contended. On Christmas day he preached in the church of Canterbury, and at the conclusion of his sermon he told the congregation, *that his dissolution was near, and he should quickly depart from them.* At this, many of the audience wept; when suddenly changing his looks and voice, he vehemently inveighed against the vices of the age, and thundered out an anathema, or curse, in general terms, against the greater part of king Henry's court. Then lighting the candles, he by name excommunicated Ranulf de Broc and Robert his brother; though the latter had been guilty of no other offence than cutting off the tail of one of Becket's sumpter horses; but to the pride of the archbishop, no sin could be more unpardonable than such an affront*.

HARRY.

Will you be so kind as to explain that, mam-

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 352, &c.

ma? Why did Becket light the candles? and what does excommunication mean?

MRS. B.

Excommunication was an ecclesiastical censure, by which the offending person was expelled from the church. When it was practised in its greatest rigour, as in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the excommunicated person was deprived of all his natural and legal rights: his wife, children, and servants, were forbidden to come near him; and he was excluded from all kinds of offices. Thus, a king might be reduced to the condition of a private man, and deprived of the comforts of social intercourse; and all classes of men appear to have felt the greatest horror of incurring this censure, which was considered a severer punishment than death itself*.

HARRY.

And well it might! I am sure it was very cruel and wicked of Becket, to pass such a sentence for only just cutting off a horse's tail. But what had the candles to do with it, mamma?

MRS. B.

When the priest pronounced the sentence of excommunication, he accompanied it with many ceremonies, such as ringing bells, lighting can-

* Chambers, *Art.* EXCOMMUNICATION.

dles or torches, and then trampling them out, while he uttered curses, which to us appear as shocking as the other ceremonies were childish and absurd*: but, probably, in those superstitious times, they had some effect on the minds of the people, and were one of those tricks of power by which the clergy maintained their influence.

[*Lucy reads.*]

While these scenes were acting in England, the archbishop of York, and the bishops of London and Salisbury, arrived in Normandy, where, at the feet of the king, they implored his justice and clemency for themselves, for the clergy, and for the kingdom. When the king had heard their complaints he was extremely incensed, and, unable to restrain the violence of his passion, he broke out into furious exclamations of anger. Among other inconsiderate expressions, he said, "*That he was very unfortunate to have maintained so many cowardly and ungrateful men in his court, none of whom would revenge the injuries he sustained from one turbulent priest.*" Like many passionate people, when Henry had thus vented his rage, he thought no more of what he had said; but, unhappily for him, his words were

* Chambers, *Art.* EXCOMMUNICATION.

heard and observed by four gentlemen of his bed-chamber, who, thinking to please the king by gratifying his passion, neglected that regard to his honour which a real attachment to his character should have inspired. Thus rashly judging, they made no distinction between a sudden impulse of anger, and a settled intention to commit a wicked action; and thought they should greatly oblige the king by murdering Becket, in case they did not succeed in making him reverse the sentence which he had passed on the bishops. If he refused, they intended to seize and carry him out of the kingdom; or, should his resistance render this plan ineffectual, they resolved, and even bound themselves by an oath, to put him to death. Thus determined, they passed hastily over to England, without the king's knowledge, and went to a castle belonging to Ranulf de Broc, about six miles from Canterbury: there they spent the night in consultation with Ranulf and his brother Robert, and finally arranged their plan.

On the following day, being the 29th of December, 1170, they went to Canterbury, attended by some soldiers who were under the command of Ranulf. The knights concealed their arms as much as possible, and divided their

followers into many small parties, that their appearance might not excite any alarm. Presently after, the four knights entered the palace unarmed, and sent a message to the archbishop, that they were come to speak to him in the name of the king their master. They were then admitted into Becket's chamber, where they found him conversing with some of his clergy. They sat down before him without returning his salutation, and there was a long silence. Reginald Fitzurse then said: "We bring you orders from the king: will you hear them in public or in private?" Becket answered, "That should be as pleased them best." Fitzurse then desiring him to dismiss all his company, he bade them leave the room; but the porter kept the door open. Fitzurse then delivered a part of what he called the king's orders; but Becket, fearing, from the roughness of his manner, that some violence was intended, called the clergy back again from the ante-room, and told the four knights that whatever they had to say might be spoken in their presence. Fitzurse then commanded him, in the name of the king, to release the excommunicated and suspended bishops. Becket replied, that the pope, not he, had passed sentence upon them, therefore, it was not in his

power to take it off*. They replied, that the sentence had been inflicted at his instigation. To this he boldly answered, that if the pope had been pleased thus to revenge the injury done to the church, he confessed *it did not displease him.* A vehement dispute followed, after which the four knights declared, it was the king's command, that the archbishop and all belonging to him should quit the kingdom. They further urged, as a reason for this order, that Becket had shamefully cast out of the church, at the instigation of his own furious passions, the ministers and domestic servants of the king, when he ought to have left them to the royal justice. The primate answered with warmth, asserting his resolution not to spare any one who presumed to offend against the church. On this, the four knights rose up immediately, and going nearer to him said: "We give you notice, that you have spoken to the peril of your head." His answer was: "Are you come to kill me? I have committed my cause to the Supreme Judge of all, and am therefore unmoved at your threats. Nor are your swords more ready to strike, than my

* This assertion was false. Becket *had* received power from the pope to release the bishops of London and Salisbury; and this he had himself acknowledged soon after his landing. See Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 349.

mind is to suffer martyrdom." At these words one of the knights turned to the ecclesiastics who were present, and in the name of the king commanded them to secure the person of Becket; declaring they should answer for him if he escaped. The archbishop hearing this, said, "Why should any of you imagine I intend to fly? I came not hither to fly, but to stand the malice of the impious, and the rage of assassins." Upon this, the knights went out, commanding every one, at the peril of their lives, to wait the event in silence. Soon after, intelligence was brought to the primate that the knights were arming themselves. "What matters it?" said he, with an air of unconcern: "let them arm." His servants and friends now felt alarmed at his danger. The servants shut and barred the abbey-gate, and the monks led the archbishop by a private way, through the cloisters into the church, where the evening service was performing.

The knights were now come before the gate of the abbey, and would have broken it open; but Robert de Broc, who was better acquainted with the building, showed them a window, through which they entered; and not finding Becket in any chamber of the palace, they followed him to the cathedral. When the monks saw them coming, they were going to lock the

door; but the archbishop forbade them, saying, "You ought not to make a castle of the church. It will protect us sufficiently without being shut; nor did I come hither to resist, but to suffer." He then opened the door himself, called in some monks who stood without, and afterwards went up to the high altar.

The knights, finding no obstacle, rushed into the choir, and brandishing their weapons, exclaimed, "Where is Thomas Becket? Where is that traitor to the king and kingdom?" No answer was heard, and they called yet more loudly, "Where is the archbishop?" Becket then turned, and coming down the steps of the altar, said, "Here am I, no traitor, but a priest. What would you have with me? I am ready to suffer in the name of him who redeemed me with his blood. God forbid that I should fly for fear of your swords, or recede from justice." The knights once more commanded him to take off the excommunication and suspension of the bishops. He replied, "No satisfaction has yet been made, nor will I absolve them." "Then," said they, "thou shalt instantly die, according to thy desert." "I am ready to die," answered he, "that the church may obtain liberty and peace in my blood; but in the name of God, I forbid you to hurt any of my people."

The conspirators now rushed upon him, and endeavoured to drag him out of the church, intending, as they afterwards declared, to take him prisoner to the king; or, if they failed in that, to kill him in a less sacred place. But he clung so fast to one of the pillars in the choir, that they could not force him from it. During the struggle, Reginald Fitzurse pressing harder upon him than the others, Becket pushed him away with expressions of such reproachful contempt, that, unable any longer to repress his fury, Fitzurse lifted up his sword. The archbishop perceived that further resistance would be useless, and immediately resumed his dignified composure: then, bowing his head, he joined his hands together, and recommended his own soul and the cause of the church to God, and to the saints of that cathedral. Alike inflexible in death as in life, he received repeated wounds in that devout posture, and in perfect stillness. The assassins soon accomplished their fatal purpose, and Becket fell prostrate on his face, retaining to the last moment of his life, that dauntless courage which had ever distinguished his character*.

* Lyttelton, vol. iv. p. 353—361.

"With all his faults," said Harry, as Lucy laid down the book, "you must own, mamma, that Becket died like a hero!"

MRS. B.

Yes, my dear Harry, I will freely own that Becket, especially in the close of his life, evinced such a spirit as constitutes *heroism*, had it been exerted in a cause beneficial to mankind. He possessed great talents, elevated thoughts, and invincible courage; but his violent and ambitious temper converted these splendid qualities into sources of mischief: he became inflexible in his resolutions, and implacable in his resentments.

LUCY.

That unforgiving temper seems to have been the chief cause of his death; but I think that some of his other faults were almost as bad.

MRS. B.

It cannot be denied that he was guilty of wilful perjury, that he opposed the course of public justice, and acted in defiance of the laws of his country. He was also, in the highest degree, ungrateful to a very kind master, who placed the greatest confidence in him, and who had raised him from a private station, to be the second man in the kingdom.

HARRY.

I know that is all true, mamma; and though

I admire Becket for his courage and abilities, I think he was a very wicked man.

MRS. B.

The degree of a man's wickedness very much depends upon the *motives* which influence his actions, and as these can only be fully known by Him to whom all hearts are open, we ought not, perhaps, to call Becket wicked. It is possible that he might be so far misled by the prejudices of an ignorant, bigoted age, as to think that he was doing an acceptable service to God, in contending, even to death, for the utmost excess of church and papal power. But had his splendid talents been devoted to the real good of his country; had he defended the established laws, and the great principles of public justice, with as much zeal and courage as he opposed them, we should have felt no hesitation in placing him among those illustrious men, whose names will descend with honour to posterity*.

HARRY.

I dare say Henry was very much shocked when he heard of the murder of Becket. Does not the story say any thing about it, Lucy?

LUCY.

No; it ended with Becket's death, and the

* Lyttelton, *ib.* p. 361—363.

next story is on quite a different subject; but I dare say mamma can satisfy you.

MRS. B.

Harry judges very rightly, for when the king heard that those four knights had secretly left the court, he suspected their purpose, and despatched immediate orders to all the sea-ports, commanding them to be stopped and brought back. But, unhappily, they had found the wind fair, and crossed the channel before the arrival of the king's messengers. It appears from the story, that Reginald Fitzurse and his companions persuaded themselves that they were going to confer an obligation on their sovereign by the murder of Becket; but when the hurry and agitation attendant on the commission of such a crime had subsided, they appear to have judged very differently, and to have been conscious that the deed they had done would be viewed with horror by so just and generous a prince as Henry. This, at least, is certain, that not daring to return to Normandy, they went together to a castle in Yorkshire, where they staid many months: a proof that they had not committed this crime by their master's orders, and that, so far from expecting any recompence, they feared his displeasure*.

* Lyttelton, vol. v. p. 1—4.

When Henry first heard of the murder, he appeared quite overwhelmed with sorrow, and several days elapsed before his friends could prevail upon him to assemble a council, and consider what measures ought to be taken. He foresaw such unhappy consequences from this event, that he remained for forty days secluded in his palace, abstaining from all amusements, exercise, and business; and often sighing, and repeating these words, "Alas, alas, that this mischief should have happened*!"

LUCY.

Poor Henry! it was a sad affair for him indeed! Most likely, the pope and his other enemies believed him to be guilty.

MRS. B.

Yes; it was generally supposed that the murder had been committed by Henry's orders, and for a little while he was apprehensive of incurring the terrible sentence of excommunication; but the representations of his ambassadors produced such a change in the dispositions of the court of Rome, that the pope was prevailed upon to write a very friendly letter to Henry, and to absolve the English bishops whom Becket had excommunicated†.

HARRY.

That is a much better ending of the affair

* Lyttelton *ib.* p. 4, 5. † Henry, *ib.* p. 279. &c.

than I expected. I suppose Henry was very happy and prosperous all the rest of his life, and took extraordinary care in his choice of the next archbishop.

MRS. B.

Alas! my dear boy, the latter years of Henry the Second afford a deplorable example, that the splendour of a crown and the pride of dominion cannot bestow happiness. Queen Eleanor, a proud and violent woman, thought herself slighted by her husband, and sought revenge by the most unjustifiable means. She began by instilling the restless spirit of ambition into the heart of her eldest son: she afterwards incited both him and his brothers to rebellion, against a most affectionate and indulgent father*. Henry, the eldest of these misguided princes, after repeated rebellion, was at length, in the year 1183, while at open war with his father, seized with a fever. When the physicians informed him that they had no hope of his recovery, the keenest remorse took possession of his soul. Even the assurance of his father's forgiveness could not remove his painful sense of guilt and ingratitude; and he died in fearful agonies of mind. His unhappy father seemed to forget all his past

* Lyttelton, vol. v. p. 136, and 142.

offences, in feelings of grief and compassion for his miserable end*.

LUCY.

What a dreadful lesson for queen Eleanor! She must have been wretched indeed, when she felt herself the cause of all that misery!

MRS. B.

Whatever she felt, repentance does not seem to have been the consequence. Some years after this, her conduct induced her husband to confine her in prison, where she remained till after his death. The younger princes appear to have been equally unmoved by the sufferings and fate of their brother, and to have persisted in the same course of ambition and rebellion. At length, in the year 1189, while Henry was pursued from place to place by his son Richard, he was basely abandoned by his youngest son, John, who deserted to his enemies. This last blow to his affections was too much even for the firmness of Henry Plantagenet: grief and agitation threw him into a fever, of which he died, at Chinon†, proving by sad experience,

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child!"

* Henry, *ib.* p. 124. † *Ib.* p. 133.

HARRY.

Oh, mamma, you have not told us any thing so shocking as this! But what became of those wicked princes?

MRS. B.

We will talk of them another time. But now tell me, my dear boy, whether Henry Plantagenet, though confessed, even by his enemies, to be the greatest monarch of the age in which he lived, was not, *in reality*, more unfortunate than Matilda; who, though deprived of all her dominions, and humbled by adversity, yet possessed a treasure which could fill her heart with joy and thankfulness, when the power and splendour of royalty would have afforded no gratification?

HARRY.

I understand you, mamma: Matilda had *a good son*, and I think her lot was the happiest.

THE SARACENS.

Why gathers Europe such a host from far,
And kindles Asia with the flames of war?
HOOLE'S TASSO.

"I HAVE told you, my dear children," said Mrs. B. "of the extraordinary spirit of pilgrimage which prevailed among our Anglo Saxon ancestors; and you may readily suppose, that the same views of religious duty which induced a journey to Rome, might excite a still more powerful desire, to visit those places which had been the scene of the actions and sufferings of our Saviour himself."

HARRY.

Yes, mamma, I can suppose that very well; and I think there is more sense in it. I did not like that our countrymen should pay more respect to Peter than they did to Jesus.

MRS. B.

As we have conversed on this subject before, I hope it is not necessary now to remind you of what our Saviour said respecting worship. You know it is the disposition of our own minds,

not the place in which it is offered, that renders it acceptable. I should be sorry, however, if you imagined that there was much "more sense" in going to Jerusalem than to Rome, as an act of religion, or even as a proof of attachment to him who has done so much for us. His own criterion is the best: "If you love me, keep my commandments."

LUCY.

But, mamma, without at all considering it as an act of religion, do you not think it is very natural to feel pleasure in visiting places which have been the scene of remarkable events?

MRS. B.

You are right, Lucy; for though increasing knowledge dispels the gloom of superstition, those associations which influence the affections, still retain their power. Ingulphus, the secretary of William the Conqueror, and afterwards the abbot and historian of Croyland, has left an account of his feelings, on visiting the church of the Holy Sepulchre, where he was affected, even to tears, by the recollections it excited. Sir Sydney Smith, who went to Jerusalem soon after his successful defence of Acre against Buonaparte, experienced similar sensations. He was conducted by the resident monks, in solemn procession, through the church. When they approached the sepulchre, which is still shown

as that of our Saviour, the monks paused. Sir Sydney entered it, and requested to be left alone. He was so for about a quarter of an hour, and came out in tears*. What a change has taken place in opinion since the time of Ingulphus! What a difference between the superstitious pilgrim of the eleventh century, and the brave English officer of the nineteenth! Yet, you see, the influence of local circumstances, in exciting feelings of tenderness and sympathy, produced the same effect on both.

Lucy.

I dare say Sir Sydney Smith little thought that he should ever be compared with Ingulphus! But your story shows, mamma, that it is very natural for the sight of remarkable places to make a great impression upon us. I should like to know more about these pilgrims. What a long journey it was for them! I suppose but few persons undertook it, in comparison with the numbers who crowded the roads to Rome in the times of the Anglo Saxons.

Mrs. B.

You may very naturally conclude so, as you are unacquainted with some powerful motives which led to this undertaking. So distant a pilgrimage could not be performed without

* Turner's Hist. Eng. vol. i. p. 208. &c. &c.

considerable expence, fatigue, and danger: these difficulties were thought to add to the merit of the pilgrims who were willing to brave them; and at length a visit to the Holy Land was considered as an atonement for almost every crime*.

HARRY.

I was going to say, that people must have been very stupid in those days, only I recollected that they did not read the New Testament then, but believed whatever the priests chose to tell them. Go on, dear mamma: tell us all their motives for going on such a long pilgrimage.

MRS. B.

About the close of the tenth century, an opinion generally prevailed in Europe, that the thousand years spoken of in the 20th chapter of Revelations were accomplished, and that the end of the world was at hand. Consternation took possession of the minds of men: numbers abandoned their friends and families, and hurried to the Holy Land, where they imagined that Jesus would quickly appear to judge the world. Another motive was presented by a change in the government of Syria, which,

* Robertson's Charles V. vol. i. p. 26.

about the middle of the eleventh century, was conquered by the Turks, a warlike and barbarous people. In consequence of that event, pilgrims to the Holy Land were exposed to every kind of wrong and outrage*. When they had reached the city, so long the object of their hopes, its Turkish masters forbade all entrance, unless a sum of money was paid as tribute at the gate. Great numbers had already exhausted their resources in their long journey, and nearly a thousand wretched and almost naked pilgrims usually lay without the walls, unable to raise the sum required for admittance into the city. The monasteries and Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem supplied these fainting wanderers with all the relief they could afford, but their means were not abundant: they themselves had much to suffer. The Turks rushed into their churches, sat upon their altars, overturned and trampled on their sacred vessels, scourged the pilgrims and the clergy, and insulted or imprisoned the patriarch†. Those pilgrims who returned to Europe, related the dangers they had encountered in visiting Jerusalem, and gave an exaggerated account of the cruelties of the Turks. Their countrymen

* Robertson, *ib.* p. 26, &c. † Turner, *ib.* p. 270.

listened with eager sympathy to the tale, which excited general alarm and indignation *.

HARRY.

Indeed they had reason to be indignant! But I am surprised that the Turks should occasion any alarm in Europe. I thought they were a proud, solemn, indolent people, fond of sitting at their ease in the shade, to smoke tobacco and drink coffee †. I should never have thought of the Europeans being *afraid* of them!

MRS. B.

I perceive you are better acquainted with what the Turks *are*, than with what they *have been;* but as they were intimately connected with the feelings and actions of the son and successor of Henry Plantagenet, some idea of their former character will be of use to us, and prevent the necessity of many explanations.

"Thank you, mamma," said Harry: "I should like to know what the Turks *have been*, and why an English king should trouble himself about them."

MRS. B.

I am afraid we shall not exactly understand that, unless we go a little further back, and ob-

* Robertson, *ib.* p. 27.

† Aikin's Geog. Delin. vol. i. p. 310—312.

tain some knowledge of the Saracens; a people to whom we owe many important obligations, and who were the means of raising the Turks to that power, which, in the twelfth century, filled Europe with dismay.

Harry then began to read the following account of

THE SARACENS.

Towards the end of the sixth century, a new dominion arose in the east, which was destined to produce a wonderful change, both in Europe and in Asia. The Arabs were then a rude nation, composed of independent tribes, who traced their descent from the patriarch Abraham, and professed a mixed religion, partly derived from the Jews, and partly from the idolatrous heathens. About this period their attention was excited by Mohammed, who sought to raise himself to power and notice, by pretending that he was commissioned by the Almighty to teach a new religion to men*. This extraordinary person was descended from the princes of Mecca, and distinguished by the majestic beauty of his person. He adhered scrupulously to the grave and ceremonious po-

* Tytler, El. Gen. Hist. vol. ii. p. 2.

liteness of his country, and dignified his respectful attention to the rich and powerful, by his affability and condescension to the poorest of his fellow-citizens. Thus fitted by nature to engage the affections of men, he was also gifted with powers which enabled him to acquire dominion over them. He not only possessed a retentive memory, a sublime imagination, and persuasive eloquence, but a clear, rapid, and decisive judgment, and that courage which influences both thought and action*.

Before Mohammed explained his views and feelings to his fellow-citizens, he acquired a reputation for holiness, by retiring every morning to a solitary cave in a neighbouring mountain, where he continued all day, pretending that he was engaged in prayer and meditation, or in conference with the angel Gabriel, who communicated to him, from time to time, revelations of the Divine Will. These revelations, when collected and arranged, composed the book called *the Koran*, which is the Bible of the Mohammedans†.

On his first public appearance as a prophet, his countrymen laughed at him, and ridiculed the folly of his pretensions; but Mohammed

* Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 257.

† Prideaux's Life of Moham. p. 12—18.

was not, on that account, discouraged from proceeding in his designs, which he managed with great art*. The Koran, though abounding with wild fictions, contained just and elevated notions of the Divine nature, and of the duties which man owes to man, as well as precepts applicable to all the business of life†.

It would detain us too long to attempt an explanation of all the causes which ensured the success of these new doctrines. Their principal recommendation to the Arabians, was the spirit of martial energy which pervaded them. A people of strong passions, long accustomed to habits of pillage and murder, "whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them," found in the laws of their native prophet, not only a permission, but a *command* to desolate the world; and a promise of enjoying a paradise abounding in all the good things that most delighted them on earth, of which they could therefore form a clear and adequate conception. They needed but little excitement to adopt such a religion as this: its principle was already in their hearts, and the assurance of its success in their swords‡.

* Prideaux's Life of Moham. p. 21.

† Hallam, vol. i. p. 507. ‡ *Ib.* p. 508.

LUCY.

I see that all this might make the religion of Mohammed very agreeable to the Arabs: but do you think that they really *believed* the angel Gabriel came to visit him in his cave, as he pretended?

MRS. B.

At first they were very incredulous. It is even said that they took the liberty of requesting the prophet to work a miracle, in proof of his divine commission: "If thou be a prophet," said they, "and greater than any that were sent before thee, do thou work the like miracles to manifest it unto us. Do thou make the dead to rise, the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear:——or let us see the book thou wouldst have us believe to come from heaven, descend to us from thence, legible in our eyes; or the angel which thou tellest us doth bring it unto thee, and then we will believe in thy word*."

HARRY.

Ha! they have caught him now. Mohammed was cunning, if he could contrive to get out of that difficulty!

MRS. B.

He was not so easily posed as you imagine, Harry. His ready wit suggested several plausi-

* Prideaux, p. 27, &c.

ble answers; but this proved the most convincing, "That God had sent Moses and Jesus with miracles, and yet men would not be obedient to their word; therefore he had now sent him, in the last place, without miracles, to force them by the power of the sword to do his will." He then forbade his disciples to enter into any further disputes about his religion. Instead of this, he commanded them to fight for it, and destroy all those who should contradict his law. Hence it has been customary for Mohammedan preachers to have a drawn sword placed by them while they deliver their sermons, intimating that the doctrines they teach are to be enforced and defended by the sword*. You had better read on now, Harry.

[*Harry reads.*]

At the death of Mohammed, his power was confined within the limits of the Arabian peninsula†; but the propagation of his religion by the sword, being a duty imposed upon his followers by the precepts of the Koran, they soon carried their faith and their arms beyond the confines of Arabia, and were known, from Mecca to the Euphrates, by the dreaded name of SARACENS‡. Within thirty years they sub-

* Prideaux, p. 29, &c. † Hallam, *ib.* p. 509.

‡ Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 283.

dued and possessed Syria, Persia, and Egypt. The north of Africa, to its western extremity, soon yielded to their sway. From Morocco they rushed like a torrent over Spain, and made repeated attempts on France: then, turning towards Italy, they entered the territories of Naples and Genoa, endangered Rome, and conquered Sicily. Constantinople, the last relic of the mighty Roman Empire, still checked their advances, but was insulted and besieged by hordes of warlike enthusiasts.

Thus, the rapid progress of this new religion threatened to sweep all before it. But the same power that leads on the tide of the ocean, restrains its encroachment by fixed laws; and thus, with the implicit faith and ferocious energy of these Arabian conquerors, were combined other qualities, which gradually undermined their power, and prevented them from acquiring the empire of the world. Originally divided into small, independent tribes, they retained a spirit of turbulence and of party discord. Their third caliph was murdered in an insurrection, and but few of his successors had either a tranquil reign or a natural death. The same constitutional evil checked them every where, and diminished their power; till, in the tenth century, the Saracen empire was become so weakened by division, that the Greek emperors

no longer trembled in the walls of Constantinople, but recovered the command of Asia Minor. Christianity was now freed from danger, and Mohammedanism began to decline*.

The astonishing success of the Arabian caliphs, which at first appeared as if it would establish ignorance and imposture in the government of the world, was productive of important benefits to mankind. The religion of Mohammed, though mixed with great errors, was infinitely purer than that of the surrounding nations. He taught his followers to worship the One true God, and strongly enforced the practice of many moral virtues. Wherever this faith was proclaimed, idolatry fell before it: it abolished the fire-worship of Persia, and the absurd superstitions of Egypt. The Greek empire was then sunk into a state of great degeneracy. Its population was Christian only in name, but in manners and conduct, worse than pagan; while the hardy enthusiasts of Arabia presented fresh examples of virtues which that effeminate and licentious age had almost forgotten. They were distinguished by temperance, frugality, love of justice, and liberality; by reverential and fervent piety, and by constancy which no difficulty could subdue, which carried them

* Turner, p. 257, &c.

over every obstacle, and made their triumphs appear almost miraculous, from the astonishing rapidity of their progress*.

Besides these animating examples of the moral virtues, Europe is greatly indebted to the victorious Saracens, for the new sources of knowledge which they opened to the inquiring mind. When the Arabs first emerged from their deserts, they were an ignorant people, whose only literature consisted of poetry, abounding with wild imagery and strong feeling; whose only science was a slight knowledge of the stars†. The Arab, wandering over the vast solitude of his trackless desert, must have been dull indeed, if he had not lifted his eyes with admiration to those luminous bodies, which were silently performing their appointed revolutions, and filling the heavens with variety, beauty, and splendour, more glorious, because contrasted with the gloomy desolation that surrounded him.

The Syrian Christians had the merit of exciting the love of knowledge in the minds of their conquerors. Syrian physicians were about the persons of the caliphs, and, by their conversation, inspired them with rational curiosity. Much of the Grecian literature and science had

* Turner, p. 472, &c. † *Ib.* p. 474.

been translated into Syriac, a language so nearly resembling the Arabic, as to be easily acquired by an Arabian student. The disciples of Mohammed rejected with disdain all those books which treated of, or alluded to, the mythology of ancient Greece: they passed by her poets, historians, and orators, and the later disputes of her Christian fathers; while they fixed their attention with eager delight on works of astronomy. Being pure from idolatrous fable, this became their favourite study, and they soon revived those geometrical sciences which are connected with it.

The caliph Almanzor was the first who began that cultivation of the sciences, which has reflected so much honour on the Arab name. His successor, Haroun al Rashid, the hero of the Arabian tales, increased the progress of knowledge, by the patronage which he afforded to learned men. In his reign the works of Euclid were translated into Arabic. But it was to Almamon, who ascended the throne of the caliphs in the year 813, that the Saracens were most indebted. He sent to the Greek emperor for works of science, and also collected them from Persia, Egypt, and Syria, from Chaldea, and Armenia. He inquired for men able to translate them, he incited his subjects to study, he encouraged them by his own example, and

was fond of being present at the conversations of those learned men whom he had assembled. Perhaps no country ever witnessed such a sudden acquisition of knowledge, as was made under his patronage. Almamon was nearly the contemporary of Alfred; but he was more fortunate than our excellent king in the subjects of his study, and in the lasting effect he produced on the minds of his people. Natural philosophy, though so applicable to the real business of life, had never been cultivated at Rome, and Alfred had nothing but the Latin literature to impart. Almamon diffused that knowledge which is so intimately connected with the wants and interests of men, that the benefits it confers ensure its cultivation.

The establishment of the Saracen power in Spain, created new seats of learning in the west of Europe, where the sciences were zealously cultivated. Not only astronomy and geometry, but arithmetic, medicine, natural history, and chemistry, music, poetry, and grammar, claimed the attention of these Arabian philosophers.

In Spain, as in Syria, the Mohammedans permitted the Christians to remain among them, on condition of paying tribute*. This indul-

* Turner, p. 475—478.

gence was allowed by the Koran to the worshippers of One Supreme Being; but idolaters, who acknowledged no divine revelation, were compelled to embrace the religion of the conquerors, or were put to the sword*. The Spanish Christians soon applied themselves to the study of the Arabian sciences, and thus established an easy channel for their introduction into other European countries. Many persons were attracted, by the fame of the Spanish Mohammedans, to visit their country, and acquire their knowledge. One of the first of these literary heroes was Gerbert, who, after spending some time among the Saracens in Spain, returned to France, where he established schools, and communicated the knowledge he had acquired. To him all the nations in the north and west of Europe are indebted, for the first information they received of the Arabic figures and arithmetic. That "knowledge is power," was never more strikingly exemplified than in the history of Gerbert. Many, astonished at acquirements which they were incapable of comprehending, considered him as a magician. The king of France and the emperor of Germany became his pupils; and though he was descended from parents in the lower ranks of society, his genius

* Hallam, p. 509.

and his learning gradually advanced him from one ecclesiastical dignity to another; and at length Otho placed his preceptor in the papal chair, where he assumed the name of Silvester the Second*.

HARRY.

Why then, belief in magic is a very simple thing indeed: it seems only to have been caused by the wonder that ignorant people felt, when they saw things done which they could not account for. They must have been ignorant indeed, to be so much astonished at a man understanding arithmetic!

MRS. B.

Gerbert probably understood many other things. William of Malmsbury, who records our arithmetical obligations to him, says, it was reported that Gerbert had been taught by the Saracens to understand the *language of birds*†. We may, therefore, fairly conclude that he had studied natural history; and had, by diligent observation of the habits and instinct of the feathered tribes, acquired such an intimate knowledge of their propensities, as could only be accounted for, in that ignorant and superstitious age, by supposing that he understood their language.

* Turner, p. 479; and Henry, vol. ii. p. 364. † Henry, *ib.*

LUCY.

Perhaps Gerbert had learned to tell when an eclipse would happen, and that would be enough to make his countrymen think him a magician. Do you remember, Harry, how Columbus frightened the poor Indians?

HARRY.

Yes; and you know, that when mamma read that passage, we all agreed that Columbus acted very wrong, though the historian calls it "*a happy artifice**."

MRS. B.

I am glad that Lucy has alluded to the calculation of eclipses, because that is one of the uses of arithmetic with which you are unacquainted. As your knowledge increases, you will perceive that there are many other subjects to which it may be applied. But, not to meddle with things beyond your present powers of comprehension, are you aware how greatly the study of even the first rules of that science, is facilitated by the use of those Arabic figures, for which we are indebted to Gerbert? Look at the lumbering, tedious manner in which the date is expressed in this title-page of Henry's History, MDCCLXXIV.

* Robertson's America, vol. i. p. 240.

HARRY.

The Arabians would have expressed that number in four figures, and I am sure we are very much obliged to Gerbert for teaching us how to do it. But, mamma, when people made such a ceremony of writing 1774, I cannot imagine how they could express very high numbers; and as for borrowing and carrying, what a mystery it must have been: how could they possibly manage it! I never thought of this before.

MRS. B.

Then *now* you will be less surprised to hear that Aldhelm, the most learned and ingenious man of the age in which he lived, considered arithmetic as a science almost exceeding the utmost powers of the human mind*.

LUCY.

Then we need not wonder at ignorant people thinking that Gerbert was a magician. But who was this Aldhelm, mamma? We have not heard of him before.

MRS. B.

He was nearly related to Ina, king of the West Saxons, and the first of that nation who was celebrated for learning. He lived nearly two hundred years before Alfred, who regarded

* Henry, *ib.* p. 369.

Aldhelm as the best of all the Saxon poets; and I dare say you will allow that he was a good judge of their merit. I will tell you an anecdote of this ancient bard, because it conveys a pleasing idea of his character.

Like most other learned men of those times, he was a priest. He founded the monastery of Malmsbury, of which he was abbot; and while he filled that station, he observed that his barbarous countrymen were unwilling to listen to grave discourses. Aldhelm had a fine voice, and great skill in music as well as in poetry; he resolved to apply these delightful talents to the improvement of those who were under his care, and composed a number of little poems, which he sung to them after mass. The sweetness of his voice fixed the attention of his audience, and by this means they were gradually instructed and civilized*.

LUCY.

Thank you, mamma, that is a very pretty story; and I think Aldhelm deserved to be the favourite poet of Alfred, since he had something of his own spirit. How kind it was of him to take so much pains with those barbarous people!

* Henry, *ib.* p. 319.

MRS. B.

The knowledge which Gerbert acquired in Spain, has led us a long way from our Arabian philosophers. Suppose you finish the story now, Harry.

[*Harry reads.*]

The English were not slow in applying to these new sources of intelligence. Several of our countrymen went to Spain, and employed themselves in the acquisition of various sciences. Athelard of Bath, who returned to England in the reign of Henry the First, must be looked upon as the father of natural philosophy in this country. His books are the earliest records we possess, of such subjects being discussed by Englishmen. Athelard also translated Euclid, and some astronomical works, from Arabic into Latin: these books are in the public libraries at Oxford.

Among these early travellers, we find "The wondrous Michael Scott," whose wizard fame was acquired, like that of Gerbert, by his skill in the Arabian sciences, which he studied in Spain. His ignorant countrymen exercised their invention instead of their understanding, when they attempted to account for his exploits; and our Border poets, who made them the subject of their ballads, proved as expert in mixing

truth with fiction, as their predecessors in that art among the ancient Greeks*.

The knowledge of natural philosophy is now too widely diffused, to obtain for its professors the reputation of magical skill; but we should not forget, that the light which first penetrated the thick gloom of our ignorance, was derived from those learned Arabians, who had possessed themselves of all the knowledge which industry could then attain. They refused no labour in the discovery of truth, and became superior to their Greek masters, whose ingenuity was frequently wasted upon *words*, by that experimental knowledge of *facts*, which enabled them to reason more justly, and more usefully. The love of science has since declined among them; and we now only know of what the genius of Arabia has been capable, by the dusty treasures of libraries, and the faithful records of history†.

HARRY.

You know, mamma, that I was always fond of reading about the Arabs, and their pathless deserts, and faithful camels, and fine, spirited horses; but this story has made me

* Turner, p. 481—484. See also The Lay of the Last Minstrel, and the notes to that poem.

† *Ib.* p. 485—489.

think of them with a great deal more respect. What a pity that they should lose their love for knowledge!

MRS. B.

I am not of your opinion, my dear boy. Since "knowledge is power," and the empire of the Saracens was calculated to produce only temporary good, we ought not to wish that it had been durable. We must not forget that they were the deluded followers of an impostor, and possessed the vices inseparable from a religion which was to be propagated by the sword. These vices increased with their prosperity, and the mischiefs of their false system became more apparent, as their moral qualities declined. Why then should we regret that their knowledge departed with their virtue? When the empire of the Saracens ceased to be beneficial to mankind, it was broken up; and new kingdoms, with other qualities, and other usefulness, were raised unexpectedly to existence and to greatness, to undergo, in their turn, the vicissitudes of conquest, of power, and of degradation; but all contributing, under the superintending care of a benevolent Providence, to the improvement, civilization, and happiness of the world*.

* Turner, p. 473, &c.

I believe that our story is about to introduce the successors of the Saracens to our notice. Read on, my dear, and let us become acquainted with them.

[*Harry reads.*]

At the close of the tenth century, the emperors of Constantinople possessed the greater part of the kingdom of Naples, part of Sicily, the whole of Turkey in Europe, Asia Minor, and some part of Armenia and Syria*. These triumphs were not of long duration. A new race of people arose, to support the standard of Mohammed, and established a more lasting empire, on the ruins of that of the Arabian caliphs. Beyond the north-eastern frontier of the Saracen empire, dwelt a warlike and powerful nation of the Tartar race, who defended the independence of Turkestan, from the sea of Aral to the great central chain of mountains. In the wars which the Saracens carried on against them, many of these Turks were taken prisoners and dispersed over the empire. In the fruitful valleys of Damascus and Bassora, the Arabs of the Desert had forgotten their ancient habits of temperance and activity; and the captive Turks were distinguished for their strength and courage, among a people grown effeminate by

* Hallam, *ib.* p.518.

luxury. One of the caliphs observing this, formed bodies of guards out of these prisoners. A fatal policy! for the Turkish soldiers soon gave the law to their masters, and in about one hundred years the power of the caliphs was nearly destroyed*.

In the beginning of the eleventh century, the great body of the Turks inhabited the shores of the Caspian. At this period they embraced the religion of Mohammed, and professing it with all the energy peculiar to their character, and with all the zeal of new converts, they renewed its power over the minds of men, at a period when, but for their support, it might have sunk into oblivion†.

Successive princes extended the power of the Turkish empire from China to the Hellespont‡; when, about twenty years after they had conquered Jerusalem, a Frenchman, generally known by the name of Peter the Hermit, visited the Holy Sepulchre. His resentment and sympathy were excited by the indignities which he suffered himself, and by those which he saw offered to other pilgrims. He mingled his tears with those of the patriarch of Jerusalem, and earnestly inquired if there was no hope of relief,

* Hallam, *ib.* p. 511—515. † Turner, *ib.* p. 260.
‡ *Ib.* p. 261.

from the influence of the Greek emperor? "We have no hope from Greece," replied Simeon: "it can scarcely support itself: it has lost half its empire within a few years." Peter had been a soldier in his youth; he felt the enthusiasm of his early years revive, and exclaimed with energy, "I will rouse the martial nations of Europe in your cause!" The astonished patriarch dismissed him with letters of credit and complaint, and Peter departed for Europe*.

No sooner had he landed, than he hastened to deliver his letters to Pope Urban the Second, and engaged him to support the cause he had so zealously espoused. The indefatigable hermit then traversed Italy, passed the Alps, and visited the courts of princes, and the cottages of the poor. He preached to innumerable crowds, in the churches, the streets, and the highways. Though his person was small, and his appearance mean, his countenance was animated, and his language vehement. He spoke as he felt, and he had seen what he described: his own emotion awakened the sympathy of those whom he addressed. When he painted the sufferings of the natives and pilgrims of Palestine, every heart was melted to compassion: when he challenged the warriors of the age to defend their brethren,

* Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 1, &c. and Turner, p. 271.

and rescue the city of their Saviour, every breast glowed with indignation. The most eloquent of Athenian orators might have envied his success: the nations of Europe became animated with enthusiasm like his own, and impatiently waited for the counsels and decrees of the pope*.

At length Urban summoned a council to meet at Placentia; and, as no building could contain so vast a multitude, they assembled in a plain near the city. The ambassadors of the Greek emperor were introduced, to plead the distress of their sovereign, and the danger of Constantinople, now divided only by a narrow sea from the victorious Turks, the common enemies of the Christian name. The suppliants flattered the pride of the assembled princes; and appealing at once to the principles of policy, and the feelings of religion, exhorted them to repel these barbarous invaders on the confines of Asia, rather than to wait their approach in the heart of Europe. At the description which was given of the misery and danger of the Christians of the east, the assembly burst into tears. The most eager declared their readiness to march; and the Greek ambassadors were dismissed, with the assurance of speedy and powerful assistance†.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 272; and Gibbon, p. 2—4. † *Ib.* p. 6.

From the council of Placentia, the rumour of this great design went forth among the nations. The clergy, on returning to their homes, preached in every bishopric the merit and glory of delivering the Holy Land from the infidels; and when the pope assembled another council at Clermont, and addressed the multitude from a lofty scaffold erected in the market-place, he was interrupted by the shouts of thousands, who exclaimed with one voice: "*God wills it—God wills it.*" "It is indeed the will of God," replied the pope; "and let this memorable word be for ever adopted as your cry of battle, to animate the devotion and courage of the champions of Christ. His cross is the symbol of your salvation; wear it: a red, a bloody cross, as an external mark on your breasts or shoulders, as a pledge of your sacred and irrevocable engagement!"

The proposal was joyfully accepted, and great numbers, both of the clergy and laity, hastened to impress the sign of the cross on their garments; and after confessing their sins and receiving absolution, these champions were dismissed, with an admonition to invite their countrymen and friends to join them; and their departure for the Holy Land was fixed for the fifteenth of August, in the succeeding year*.

* Gibbon, *ib.* p. 10, &c.

Such were the circumstances which gave rise to the first Crusade.

HARRY.

How I should like to read an account of those expeditions! Were they called crusades, on account of those red crosses which the pope desired the champions to wear?

MRS. B.

I believe so: the pilgrims were themselves called *croises*, or cross-bearers, from the badge which they assumed. In the first crusade these were all red: in the third, the French alone retained that colour; while green crosses were worn by the Flemings, black by the Germans, yellow by the Italians, and *white* by the English. This seems rather extraordinary, since *red* has long since been considered our national colour*.

LUCY.

Yes: I remember the warriors of Branksome watched,

"To see St. George's *red cross* streaming."

MRS. B.

Pilgrims to the Holy Land were not only distinguished by these various-coloured crosses, but by the *scrip* and *staff*, which they received

* Gibbon, *ib.* p. 11, *note;* and Chambers, *Art.* CROISADE.

from the hands of priests in a church. Even the kings of France, who went on these dangerous expeditions, complied with the established custom.

When the pilgrims had accomplished their journey, and were on the point of returning, they used to cut off branches from the palm-trees, which abound in Palestine, and bring them home, as proofs of having completed their enterprise. These trophies were carried to church, when they went to return thanks for their happy success, and presented to the priest, who placed them on the altar*.

LUCY.

You have told us before of the olive, and laurel, and parsley crowns of the Greeks: now we may add the palm-branches of the Christians to our list of triumphal plants.

HARRY.

Let the triumphal plants alone now, dear Lucy. I want to hear more about the Crusades. Did any of our English kings go to Palestine, mamma?

MRS. B.

None of the sovereigns of Europe joined the first Crusade, which took place in the reign of William Rufus; but the third was directed by

* Du Cange, Dissert. on Joinville.

Frederick Barbarossa, emperor of Germany; Philip Augustus, king of France; and our own Richard Cœur de Lion. We will read some particulars of this crusade to-morrow; and as you are now sufficiently acquainted with the origin of those famous expeditions, I need only add, that the first crusaders, after suffering incredible hardships, and losing multitudes of their companions, succeeded in freeing the holy city from the Turkish yoke. Several Christian princes reigned in Jerusalem with the title of king, and struggled to maintain their dignity for about ninety years. In the mean time, the Turks recovered from their defeat, and established new kingdoms at Iconium, Aleppo, and Damascus. At length the Turkish power in Egypt and in Syria was united under the command of a youthful hero, before whose conquering sword the kingdom of the crusaders vanished like a dream*.

HARRY.

Oh, mamma, who was this hero! It is not late: I wish you would be so very good as to tell us all you know about him.

MRS. B.

That would be to anticipate our next story; but perhaps you may read it with more interest,

* Turner, *ib.* p. 274—296.

if you have some idea of the character of Saladin, for that was his name. In him the Turkish character appears to the greatest advantage: he was not only the successful protector, but the most accomplished example of the religion he professed. Distinguished for his generosity, fortitude, and patriotism, he was equally remarkable for his zealous attachment to the religion of Mohammed. Ever constant and fervent in his prayers, when the appointed hour arrived, if he happened to be on a journey he descended from his carriage to perform his devotions. If from illness he was incapable of observing the fasts enjoined by the prophet, his cadhi was ordered to make a memorandum of the deficiency, that it might afterwards be supplied. To hear the Koran read was his favourite occupation, and he was often observed to shed tears at the recital of the most affecting passages. In some parts of his character, Saladin deserves to be compared to our favourite Alfred. Like him, he administered justice to his people in person: every Monday and Thursday he received all petitions, patiently continued till night in answering them, and suffered none to appeal to him unheard. He resembled Alfred also in his uncommon fortitude; of this I have read an anecdote, which, perhaps, may interest you. While Saladin was oppressed with a very pain-

ful disorder, he was informed that the Christians were advancing. Though he was at the moment suffering the most acute pain, he mounted his horse, and formed his troops in order of battle. Forced at length to rest, he would not allow a tent to be erected, lest his enemies should suspect his indisposition, but lay down in the shade, with a linen covering over his head. His soldiers, in the mean time, stood their ground, and remained all night under arms. That interval Saladin spent with his physician, who endeavoured to alleviate his sufferings. After some broken slumber, this heroic prince was again on horseback at the first dawn of the following day, reviewing his troops, and forming his plans for surrounding the enemy*.

HARRY.

That *was* like Alfred! And I think, mamma, that great men are always remarkable for fortitude, however their characters may differ in other points.

MRS. B.

Fortitude is essential to the heroic character; but it is often possessed by those who have no claim to the title of *great*. I dare say you remember Dr. Aikin's story of "True Heroism†."

* Turner, *ib.* p. 313—315. † See Evenings at Home.

HARRY.

Yes, to be sure I do. I like that story! it was affection for his mother that made poor Tom bear his sufferings so nobly. And really, mamma, I think *his* motive was a better one than Saladin's.

LUCY.

Did Saladin resemble Alfred in any thing else, mamma?

MRS. B.

I believe I have mentioned the chief points of resemblance: there were some particulars in which they remarkably differed. Saladin had no taste for any study but that of the Koran, and the explanations of its zealous interpreters. The pursuits of knowledge and science were his aversion, and for poetry he had the greatest contempt *.

LUCY.

Then our Alfred was very much his superior; and I am afraid, Harry, that your Turkish hero was but a barbarian after all.

HARRY.

I do not wish him to be equal to Alfred; but he was a fine fellow for a Turk.

MRS. B.

The most striking trait in the character of

* Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 129.

Saladin, was his enthusiastic ardour for waging war against the Christians. Those texts of the Koran, which command the propagation of its doctrines by the sword, were the favourite subject of his meditations. The powers of his mind became absorbed in this great object; and not content with being the irresistible champion of his faith in Asia, he threatened the emperor of Germany that he would pass the seas, and possess himself of the European continent*. The effects which the designs and character of Saladin produced in Europe, will supply us with materials for our next story. Now, my dear children, it is time for us to separate.

* Turner, *ib.* p. 315.

RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire:
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field.

DR. JOHNSON.

WHEN the little party again assembled, Lucy began to read the following story.

The body of Henry Plantagenet lay in state in the abbey-church of Fontevrault, where it was visited by his son Richard. No reproaches, however severe; no eloquence, however powerful, could have made so touching an appeal to his best affections, as the awful stillness of the pale, unconscious form that lay stretched before him: pride and ambition were silenced for a time, and the rebellious son wept bitterly*.

Richard had many faults, but he was generous and sincere. His conduct on his acces-

* Hume, vol. i. p. 463; and Turner, vol. i. p. 302.

sion, corresponded with those feelings of remorse and affection, which the sight of his deceased father had awakened. The persons who had assisted him in his rebellious enterprises, instead of receiving those marks of honour and confidence which they anticipated, found themselves in disgrace with their new sovereign; while the faithful ministers of Henry, who had vigorously opposed the projects of his sons, were received with open arms, and continued to fill those offices, the duties of which they had so honourably discharged. In some princes, this conduct might have been regarded as the effect of prudence; but Richard was much oftener guided by passion than by policy, and, probably, the remorse occasioned by his undutiful conduct, prompted this tribute of respect to those whom his father had esteemed and trusted*.

But emotions of sorrow and regret could not be of long duration in a mind like Richard's, and feelings more natural to his character soon regained the ascendency. His personal courage and intrepidity procured him the title of *cœur de lion*†. He has also been compared to the Achilles of Homer, for his haughty, passionate, and vindictive temper, which sometimes betrayed him into acts of barbarous cruelty. In-

* Hume, vol. ii. p. 35, and p. 2. † *Ib.* p. 34.

ferior to no man in hardihood, strength, and agility; rapacious, yet frequently liberal to profusion; stern and inflexible, yet often gay, familiar, and satirical; unshaken by adversity, delighting in battle, and always victorious,—he seemed formed to be the hero of some chivalrous romance*; and was better qualified to dazzle the judgment of men, by the splendour of his enterprises, than to promote the happiness of his people, by a well-regulated policy †.

It was in Poitou that the military genius of Richard first displayed its energy. That province was given to him by his father, before he was sixteen: great part of its inhabitants were still uncivilized, and maintained their independence, amidst districts so mountainous as to be deemed inaccessible. To reduce his province to complete subjection, became the earliest passion of this youthful warrior; and every difficulty gave way before his incessant activity, his unwearied perseverance, and romantic valour. The mountain fortifications, so lofty as to be called aërial towers; the secret caverns, which had baffled all preceding assaults,—no longer afforded security to their brave inhabitants. The triumph of the conqueror was disgraced by his severity to the vanquished: this was

* Turner, p. 300. † Hume, *ib.* p. 35.

acknowledged even by his friends, and vehemently censured by his enemies*.

LUCY.

I do not think I shall like this English Achilles at all. You see, Harry, that the brave are *not* always humane†.

HARRY.

I know that used to be my opinion, and I believe it is right now, only this happens to be an exception. You laugh, Lucy, but a rule may be a very good rule, for all that. Come, go on, I dare say we shall find something to like in Richard.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The mature age of Richard fulfilled the expectations which his early achievements had excited: he was in his thirty-second year when he ascended the throne, and, as military talents make great impression on the unreflecting multitude, he seems to have been much beloved‡. His person was tall, handsome, and majestic§; and living at a period when strength and activity were greatly admired, he eagerly practised those laborious exercises which were calculated to confirm and increase his bodily powers. It was

* Turner, p. 301.
† Grecian Stories, p. 91.
‡ Hume, p. 34—35.
§ Henry, vol. iii. p. 163.

natural for such a character to delight in war, as a scene of exertion in which his courage, strength, and skill, might be crowned with glory. His parents and brothers had been much attached to the Provençal poetry, and Richard listened to the songs of the Troubadours, till he became a poet himself*. This new source of enthusiasm increased his love for romantic enterprise, and the circumstances of Europe soon called these feelings into action.

In the year 1187, the victorious Saladin, finding that the settlement of the Christians in Palestine obstructed the progress of his arms, resolved to subdue them, and led a formidable army into that small and barren country. He gained a complete victory over the Christians at Tiberias, and marched to Jerusalem, which, after a feeble resistance, yielded to his arms. The news of this event filled Europe with grief and astonishment. Clement the Third, who then filled the papal throne, commanded a Crusade to be preached in every Christian country, in order to free the holy city from the power of the Turks. The distress of the oriental Christians was indeed extreme: except a few towns on the sea-coast, nothing of importance now remained to them, of those boasted

* Turner, p. 301—302.

conquests, which, a hundred years before, were acquired at the expence of so much blood and treasure*.

It was while Europe was still agitated by this intelligence, that Richard succeeded to the dominions of his father. He cared little for religion, priests, or pope, yet he was ardently desirous of engaging in the proposed Crusade. His passion for war and military fame might, perhaps, have been excitement sufficient for such an enterprise; but Saladin, the invincible Saladin, every where dreaded, every where admired, appeared to him a foe worthy of the utmost efforts of his chivalrous enthusiasm†.

There cannot be a much greater misfortune to a nation, than that of having a military hero for its king. To lessen the burdens of his people by a wise economy, to increase their prosperity by the steady protection of industry, and to secure their rights and their affections by the impartial administration of justice, are duties but little likely to engage the attention of a monarch, who measures his glory by the extent of the desolation he may spread over distant regions, and who values his subjects only as the instruments by which his ambition may be gratified.

* Russel's Modern Europe, vol. i. p. 303. † Turner, p. 298.

Richard could not engage in the Crusade without a large army and ample treasures: his military enthusiasm hurried him forward towards the accomplishment of his purpose; his unsubdued passions were little scrupulous about the means. All expedients, even the most disgraceful, were practised, in order to raise the money he wanted. He exposed to public sale, not only the honours and possessions which, as king, he had a right to bestow in rewarding merit*, but offices of the greatest trust and power, and even the dignity of chief justiciary were thus disposed of. Elated with the hope of acquiring fame, the king was regardless of every thing else; and when some of his wiser ministers represented the danger of these proceedings, he replied, that *he would sell London itself, if he could find a purchaser.* Equally careless of the dignity of the crown, as of the rights of his people, he sold, for 10,000 marcs, the important fortresses of Roxborough and Berwick, together with that feudal claim by which the king of Scotland acknowledged himself a vassal of the English crown†.

HARRY.

That was foolish indeed! You know that Roxburgh and Berwick join Northumberland.

* Turner, p. 305. † Hume, p. 5—6.

I dare say we shall hear that the Scottish king invades England, while Richard is gone to Palestine.

MRS. B.

It must be owned that Richard's imprudence rendered such an enterprise very probable.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The king's rapacious desire of money was the cause of innumerable acts of oppression, by which all classes of his people suffered. Money was extorted from them, on every pretence that could be devised; and where pretences were wholly wanting, he obliged the rich to *lend* him sums, which he knew it would never be in his power to repay*. By these unjust and imprudent means, Richard contrived to amass a greater treasure, than had ever been possessed by any English monarch†.

The important article of supplies being thus adjusted, the king embarked at Dover, on the 11th of December, 1189, and landed the same evening near Gravelines, whence he directed his march into Normandy‡. Though the acquisition of military fame appears to have been his sole motive for engaging in the Crusade, he complied with the usual custom of pilgrims, and received the scrip and staff from the archbishop

* Hume, p. 6. † Henry, p. 138. ‡ *Ib.*

of Tours*. He then repaired to the plain of Vezelay, on the confines of Burgundy, which was the appointed place of rendezvous. There he was joined by the king of France, who had also assumed the cross; and the two monarchs renewed their promises of cordial friendship, pledging their faith not to invade each other's dominions during the Crusade: all their barons and prelates exchanged similar oaths, subjecting themselves to the penalty of excommunication, should they violate this public and solemn engagement. They then separated: Philip took the road to Genoa, Richard that to Marseilles, each expecting his fleet to be waiting at the appointed port. But the season of the year was unfavourable: the English fleet had encountered a terrible storm; and its impatient master, not choosing to wait its arrival, hired some vessels, to convey himself and his household to the shores of Italy, whither the fleet was to follow him†.

Richard and Philip were obliged to remain at Messina, till the return of spring enabled them to proceed on their voyage. During this long stay, many causes of jealousy and discord arose between them. Alike haughty, ambitious, intrepid, and inflexible, they were irritated by

* Turner, p. 306. † *Ib.* and Hume, p. 8.

the least appearance of injury, and were incapable of that mutual condescension which is necessary to preserve and restore friendship. The king of Sicily, who dreaded the power of both, and was afraid of trusting either, widened the difference between them. At length the absolute necessity of suspending their quarrels, if they wished for success in the great enterprise they had undertaken, appears to have induced them to settle all their differences by another treaty: when this was accomplished, the French king set sail for the Holy Land*.

The day after his departure, queen Eleanor, the mother of Richard, landed at Messina. She had undertaken a long journey over land, at the request of her son, in order to conduct Berengaria, a Spanish princess, with whom Richard intended to share his crown. Eleanor soon returned to England, and left Berengaria in the care of her daughter Joan, who, having been married to the last king of Sicily, was then a widow; she also intended to accompany her brother Richard to Palestine.

In the month of April, the king of England left Messina, with a fleet of 150 large ships, and 53 well-armed galleys. A violent storm soon arose and dispersed them: the king and part of

* Hume, *ib.* to p. 12. † Henry, p. 141.

the fleet were driven on the island of Crete, and afterwards to Rhodes. The ship containing queen Joan and Berengaria reached the coast of Cyprus in safety; but some vessels in company with them were wrecked on the shore. These were seized by the king of Cyprus, who also forbade the princesses to land. Richard soon arrived, and finding his sister and Berengaria still kept on the outside of the port, exposed to all the violence of the sea, he determined to revenge the indignity which had been offered them. In the first place he sent three messengers, to remonstrate with the king of Cyprus, and to request that the property he had taken from the wrecks, and the persons whom he was so unjustly detaining, might be restored. This demand was refused, and Richard indignantly called his knights to arms, and exhorted them to punish the inhospitable king. The unwarlike Cypriots made an ineffectual resistance, and the island and its sovereign fell into the power of Richard. There he married Berengaria, and caused her to be crowned queen of England*.

From Cyprus the English fleet sailed to the coast of Palestine, where the affairs of the Christians were in an alarming situation. They had been deprived, by the victorious Turks, of all

* Turner, p. 310—312.

their possessions, except the cities of Tyre, Tripoli, and Antioch; yet they resolved to besiege Acre, a city of Palestine, situated near the promontory of Mount Carmel. The watchful Saladin flew to the relief of his besieged subjects, and omitted no exertion of skill or of courage to save them. When they were on the point of yielding for want of food, he found means to introduce fresh supplies. Sometimes he bore down on the Christian lines with immense armies, besieged the besiegers, and harassed them with continual combats. All the powers of attack and defence were called into action; and the siege had already lasted two years, when the royal fleet of France, and soon afterwards that of England, cast anchor in the bay of Acre *.

The spirits of the besiegers were animated afresh by the arrival of Philip; but when they heard that Richard was at hand, they were filled with hope and confidence. As the king of England approached Acre, he beheld a spectacle of great military grandeur. Around the city spread the camps of the besiegers, a host collected from every country in Europe, and each nation distinguished by its separate stan-

* Turner, p. 316; Henry, p. 143; Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 140.

dard. The walls of Acre were manned by the brave Turks, who were busily employed in directing their warlike engines. At a distance appeared the troops of Saladin, covering the hills and the plain, where their intrepid leader was watching, to seize the first favourable moment for attacking the besiegers. The king of France, and all the nobles of the Christian army, advanced to meet Richard, as he entered the camp, amidst the general acclamations of the soldiers, who anticipated victory, from the acknowledged skill and courage of the English king*.

The siege was now carried on with renewed ardour; but Richard, confined to his bed by a fever, was unable to share the toils and dangers of his companions. At length, quite weary of this vexatious confinement, he caused a strong tower to be made, and pushed close to the trenches. Within this tower the engineers could carry on their operations in greater security. Thither Richard ordered himself to be carried upon a silken mattress; and there he pointed his own ballista, and discharged it himself, killing many Turks, by the darts and arrows he sent among them. From this tower he could also superintend the operations of the

* Turner, p. 317—318.

men employed in sapping the walls: he stimulated their exertions, by promising four pieces of gold for every stone which they could pull from them. The city was at length compelled to surrender, and Saladin, who consented to the capitulation, retired indignantly, meditating projects of future revenge*. This famous siege, which had so long engaged the attention of Europe and Asia, cost the lives of six archbishops, twelve bishops, forty earls, five hundred barons, and three hundred thousand common men†!

HENRY.

What a dreadful slaughter! I am sure Acre was bought very dear. But, mamma, Cœur de Lion did not behave much like a hero, to sit snugly in his strong tower, and kill the poor Turks at his leisure. And I wish you would be so kind as to explain the word *ballista:* I do not understand it.

MRS. B.

The ballista was an engine formerly used in sieges, to throw darts and javelins, or, sometimes, stones. It resembled a cross-bow, but was much larger, and more powerful‡. A stone, thrown by one of Richard's machines,

* Turner, 317—318. † Henry, p. 143, &c.

‡ Chambers, Art. BALLISTA.

was taken to Saladin for his observation: it had killed *twelve* men*. This may give you some idea of the destructive power of such engines.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Soon after the surrender of Acre, the king of France began to intimate his design of returning to Europe, on pretence that the climate of Palestine did not agree with his constitution, and that his life would be endangered by a longer stay. There were, however, other reasons for this proceeding. Many disputes had arisen between Richard and Philip, not only at Messina, but after their arrival in the Holy Land. They were the only kings of France and England who had fought under the same banners; but their mutual jealousy injured the cause they had engaged to support, and divided the Christian camp into factions, instead of uniting the crusaders against the common enemy†. Philip's intention of returning to France, occasioned general surprise and concern, and great pains were taken to persuade him to relinquish his design, but in vain. Before his departure, he renewed his engagements to Richard, promising not to invade any of his dominions while he was absent, or within forty days after his return. He then set sail for his

* Turner, p. 319, *note.* † Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 142.

own country, leaving five hundred knights, and ten thousand foot-soldiers, under the command of the duke of Burgundy. These troops were apparently placed at Richard's disposal; but the duke, and the other French generals, received secret instructions from their sovereign, to thwart the king of England in all his designs*.

The departure of the king of France revived the hopes of Saladin, who refused to fulfil the conditions on which Acre had been surrendered. Richard, enraged at this breach of faith, was guilty of a dreadful act of cruelty. He ordered two thousand seven hundred Turks, who had been left in his power, as hostages for Saladin's fulfilment of the treaty, to be brought out and massacred†.

HARRY.

What! commit two thousand seven hundred murders at once, on people who could not defend themselves! I hope, mamma, that part of the story is not true.

MRS. B.

This circumstance is related by Bohadin, a learned Arabian, who was the favourite of Saladin, and who wrote a history of his life.

* Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 142; Turner, p. 320; & Henry, p. 147.

† Turner, p. 320.

LUCY.

If Bohadin was the favourite of Saladin, no doubt he was Richard's enemy. I do not like to believe that an English king could commit such an action.

MRS. B.

I am afraid that the barbarous manners of the 12th century, render the story but too probable. The massacre was neither denied nor blamed by the Christian historians*; a sufficient proof that it did not strike them with the same horror that we feel in reading of it. Indeed, I think that Bohadin's account has the appearance of impartiality; for he acknowledges that breach of faith in Saladin, which provoked Richard to commit this dreadful crime: and, further, he confesses that Saladin, in revenge for the slaughter of the Turks, beheaded all the prisoners that fell into his power†.

LUCY.

That seems fair. And if the Christians took no pains to free their hero from such a charge, I am afraid that Bohadin was right. Here is another exception to your rule, Harry.

HARRY.

I will not own it as a fresh exception, because it is only another instance of cruelty in

* Gibbon, *ib.* p. 141, *note.* † Turner, p. 320, *note.*

the same brave person. My rule is a good rule still; and I think you had better read on, Lucy.

[*Lucy reads.*]

Richard, after having repaired the walls of Acre*, led the crusaders southwards, along the coast. His talents, in conducting this march of one hundred miles, from Acre to Ascalon, and the courage and constancy of his troops, obtained applause, even from their enemies. Though Saladin, with an immense army, closely followed their steps, and harassed them continually, he could gain no advantage, even when the road lay through a difficult country, except cutting off a few stragglers from the rear.

Bohadin, who witnessed and admired the successful generalship of Richard, has left the following description of the steady courage of the Christian army.

"The sixth day the sultan arose at dawn, as usual, and heard from his brother that the enemy was in motion. They had slept that night in the neighbourhood of Cesarea, and were now dressing and taking their food. A second messenger announced that they had begun their march. Our brazen drum was sounded: all were alert. The sultan came out, and

* Henry, p. 146.

I accompanied him to their army. He surrounded them with chosen troops, and gave the signal for attack. The archers were drawn out, and a heavy shower of arrows descended on both sides. The enemy advanced, but hedged round with his infantry like a wall. These were covered with thick-strung pieces of cloth, fastened together with rings, so as to resemble coats of mail. Hence, though they were overwhelmed with our arrows, their progress was not impeded. I saw, with my own eyes, several who had, not one or two, but ten darts sticking in their backs, and yet marched on with a calm and cheerful step, without any trepidation. On their parts, they darted a heavier kind of weapon, which wounded both our men and horses. They had, besides, a division of infantry in reserve, to relieve those who should be weary: this division marched close to the sea, and therefore could not be molested. When the fighters were exhausted with fatigue or wounds, this body advanced, and combated till the others were refreshed. Their cavalry in the meantime kept in the middle, and never moved beyond the infantry, unless when they rushed out to charge. In vain we tempted them to spread into the array of battle: they steadily restrained themselves, and kept their close order, slowly cutting their way,

and protecting their baggage with wonderful perseverance*."

HARRY.

I like that account, mamma: it reminds me of Xenophon. And I am very glad that you took Bohadin's description; for when people see things "with their own eyes," they describe the *little* circumstances, and that makes it appear like reality.

LUCY.

That is very true; but I think Bohadin was deceived by appearances, when he talks of men marching cheerfully along with ten darts sticking in their backs: depend upon it, they only stuck in the thick pieces of cloth that served the Christians for armour.

MRS. B.

Most likely that was the case. Bohadin only describes appearances, you know; and I do not wonder he should be surprised at the courage of men, who could march firmly and cheerfully while exposed to such annoyance. Harry, I would advise you to look at this map of the kingdom of Jerusalem†, while your sister is reading. It was drawn, you see, to represent the state of Palestine at the time of the Crusades, and you may trace Richard's march upon it.

* Turner, p. 322, *note.* † See Wilkinson's Atlas Classica.

HARRY.

Oh, thank you, mamma! Yes, I see it plainly —here, he has been marching along the shore, from the bay of Acre, with the sea on his right, and the chain of Mount Carmel on his left; and now he must be here, just a little to the south of Cesarea. Go on, dear Lucy.

[*Lucy reads.*]

In this manner the two armies proceeded along the shore of the Mediterranean, till they approached Jaffa. The Turks had now received some addition to their strength, and Saladin prepared to end the campaign by one decisive battle. The assault of the Turks was terrible; and the Bedouin Arabs, distinguished by their round shields and darker countenances, advanced to the attack with equal fury. The Turks rushed on in separate divisions, amid the tremendous noise of drums, trumpets, horns, and cymbals, which was intended to excite their courage, while, by their own more frightful howlings, they endeavoured to intimidate the Christian army. Richard received the shock with his infantry in close array. The Turks covered the plain like the clouds of a gathering storm; while their darts and arrows, darkening the air like hail, made a great slaughter of the English. Many of the Knights Hospitallers were also killed, and their companions implored

the king to let them sally out and charge; but he commanded them to be firm and patient. The Turks, emboldened by this passive behaviour, and having exhausted their quivers, rushed on to closer combat, with clubs and swords. Again the Christians murmured at being obliged to keep their ranks, but Richard calmly waited till the confidence and impetuosity of the Turks had put them into disorder. Then the appointed signal was heard. Six trumpets sounded; two in the front, two in the middle, and two in the rear of his army. The infantry immediately opened their ranks, and squadrons of knights, darting out like lightning, rushed upon the dismayed Turks with irresistible force. A withering panic spread through the army of Saladin, which was every where overthrown. In vain the brazen drum was sounded without intermission: it could no longer rally or encourage the affrighted multitude. In vain Saladin, braving every danger, flew from one part of the field to another, entreating, upbraiding, or commanding. Richard, still more active, still more terrible, now displayed his unequalled valour as a soldier, and mowed down the bravest Turkish warriors wherever he turned his steed. His knights endeavoured to imitate his example, though they could not equal his prowess; and the Sultan was at length

obliged to seek safety in flight. His emirs ascribed his defeat principally to a dreadful knight, whom no one could resist, and who was called by his own people, *King Ric**.

Saladin collected the remains of his army at Ramla, and Richard proceeded triumphantly to Jaffa, and thence to Ascalon. By his late victory he had gained the command of the sea-coast, and he built or restored several fortresses near it. At length he advanced towards Jerusalem; but the elements now fought against him. Violent rains descended: showers of hail and tempestuous winds raged with such fury, that his tents were torn from their stakes and carried away. His horses perished from cold and wet, his provisions were spoiled, both weapons and armour were covered with rust, and the soldiers suffered from disease. The more experienced warriors, observing this decay of strength, advised him to defer the attack on Jerusalem. It was indeed obvious, that if he should succeed in taking the holy city, he could not spare a sufficient number of troops to garrison it; especially as the greater part of the remaining French now left him. Richard therefore yielded to necessity, and remained awhile at Ascalon. The weather continued unfavourable, and famine began to appear.

* Turner, p. 323, &c.

The war was still carried on, and the skill and courage of Richard were continually obtaining some advantage over the Turks, when he was alarmed by intelligence that his brother John, supported by Philip, king of France, was forming plans to seize the duchy of Normandy, or, perhaps, the throne of England. This information determined him to return home; and though he yielded to the wishes of the crusaders, so far as to conduct them to Bethany, within four miles of Jerusalem, he appears to have been no longer intent on the rescue of the holy city; but the reasons which induced him not to go there, when he had so nearly reached it, are not clearly explained*.

HARRY.

But I think they may easily be supposed. You know we read in the beginning of the story, that he did not care about religion; and he would have been very silly to lose his own kingdom for the sake of beating Saladin.

[*Lucy reads.*]

The Turkish sultan had fixed his station in Jerusalem, where all his efforts were ineffectual, either to raise the courage of the inhabitants, who were struck with consternation, or to inspire them with unanimity. Saladin offered

* Turner, p. 325—327.

to share the dangers of the expected siege; but his Mamelukes, who remembered the fate of their companions at Acre, entreated him to reserve himself and them for future combats. From this state of alarm and irresolution, they were most unexpectedly relieved by the sudden retreat of Richard to Acre. Saladin in his turn resumed the offensive, and attacked Jaffa. Richard heard the news at Acre, and hastily embarking with a few followers, sailed in some merchant-vessels. Arrived at Jaffa, he leaped foremost on the beach, and with a little band he put to flight sixty thousand Turks and Saracens. Saladin appears to have almost immediately discovered the weakness of the king's forces; he returned, and attempted to surprise him during the night or early in the morning. He almost succeeded: Richard was scarcely wakened in time to escape being taken; but hastily arming and collecting his troop, he sustained a more hazardous conflict than any he had yet endured. This combat was remarkable for an instance of the powerful influence of chivalrous feeling in a Turk. Saphadin, the brother of Saladin, had anxiously desired that so renowned a knight as Richard, should confer the honour of knighthood upon his son; and the favour was granted. In the night attack, the Turkish prince met Richard on foot, and gave

him two fine coursers. The generous gift was gratefully received, and immediately used by the king to rally his scattered troops. He grasped his lance, and rode furiously along the front of the Saracen army, from the right wing to the left, without meeting an adversary who dared to encounter him. This adventure appears so like the wild exploits of romance, that the historian in relating it, exclaims, "Am I writing the history of Orlando or Amadis*!"

The surprising exertions of our hero at length secured the victory, but the fatigue he underwent brought on a slow fever, which compelled him to seek repose. He proposed a truce for three years and three months, and Saladin, whose health was also declining, agreed to it; expressing at the same time such esteem for the character of Richard, that he would rather see the Holy Land under his dominion, than under that of any other sovereign. Courteous intercourse now succeeded to warlike animosity. Richard was fond of pears and peaches, and, during his illness, he often sent to ask Saladin for them and for snow. The sultan always supplied him liberally with these refreshments. At length the truce was concluded, and Richard's health permitting his departure, he

* Gibbon.

sailed for Europe, leaving a reputation among the Mohammedans, which long survived himself and his noble enemy. Many strange adventures awaited the king of England; but a few short months concluded the life and the glory of Saladin*.

HARRY.

Is that all the story? But I know what happened to Richard on his return. He was taken prisoner by the duke of Austria, who put him into a dungeon; and his faithful page found out where he was, by singing one of his master's favourite songs under the castle window. Do you remember that, mamma? it is in the little book that I used to be so delighted with†.

MRS. B.

I believe that pretty story is one of the *fictions* which your book contains; at least, I understand it rests on no better authority than that of an old French romance‡.

HARRY.

It was a great pity to put fiction and truth together in that way; and do you know, mamma, it makes me feel angry for people to impose

* Gibbon, p. 144—148; and Turner, p. 327, 328.
† Stories for Children. ‡ Turner, p. 334, *note.*

idle tales upon children. If I knew the author of that book, I would tell him that I am not at all obliged to him.

MRS. B.

Did you ever read the preface to your little book, Harry?

HARRY.

I read the preface, mamma! Why, I was only six years old when you gave me that book. No, I never troubled myself with the preface: I began with Robert of Normandy.

MRS. B.

If you had read the preface, you would have found that it was not the purpose of the writer *to instruct*, but to *amuse;* and therefore he was not very scrupulous with regard to truth. This is much to be regretted, since the stories are so well told, that they must make a strong impression. But I am the person to blame, Harry: I ought to have explained this to you at first.

LUCY.

Then, perhaps, there is no truth in the story of Richard's captivity?

MRS. B.

I believe it is true that Richard, on his return from Palestine, finding that his enemy, the king of France, in violation of all his solemn engagements, intended to seize his person,

should he enter his dominions, attempted to pass through Germany in disguise. After many strange adventures he was discovered, and obliged to surrender to the duke of Austria, who sold him to the emperor of Germany for sixty thousand pounds of silver. The emperor, determined to obtain a considerable ransom for his illustrious prisoner, confined him in a castle in the Tyrol, from which it appeared impossible for him to escape*.

The king of France, and John, the unprincipled brother of Richard, were very much rejoiced when they heard of his imprisonment, and resolved to divide his dominions between them; but the rest of the European princes, who had no private interest in the plot, felt very indignant at a crusader, returning from his expedition to the Holy Land, receiving such treatment from a Christian prince†.

LUCY.

I think the emperor of Germany had great reason to be ashamed of himself!

MRS. B.

He appears to have been sensible of the disgrace he had incurred; for he presented Richard before a *diet*, (or great council of all the princes and prelates of the German empire.)

* Turner, p. 329—332. † *Ib.* and Henry, p. 152.

There he accused his royal captive of protecting Tancred, the usurper of the crown of Sicily—of having made war on the king of Cyprus—of having, by injurious conduct, driven the king of France out of the Holy Land—of concluding a truce with Saladin, on too easy terms,—and of having procured the assassination of Conrad, a Christian prince, who was murdered in the streets of Tyre, while Richard was in Palestine. These were heavy charges; but the royal prisoner, being permitted to speak for himself, answered all the accusations in a manner so clear and full, and at the same time so elegant and affecting, that he not only drew tears from many who heard him, but convinced the whole assembly of his innocence*.

HARRY.

It must be owned that Richard committed many cruel murders in Palestine; but that was in the case of prisoners of war, and done openly. I am glad he was not guilty of so base an action as assassination. Do you know, mamma, who was the real murderer of Conrad?

MRS. B.

Among other attempts to vindicate Richard from so terrible an imputation, a letter was

* Henry, p. 154.

produced, apparently written by a person celebrated in the history of those times, by the title of "*The Old Man of the Mountain.*" This letter was addressed to Leopold, duke of Austria, and stated that the writer had ordered the assassination of Conrad, in revenge for that prince having commanded one of his people to be put to death; and that Richard was no way concerned in the business*.

LUCY.

Mamma, why do you say "*apparently written?*" Do you think the letter was a forgery?

MRS. B.

That is one of the subjects on which you will find historians differ, when you come to read, as I hope you one day will, the full account of these transactions. But whether the letter was authentic or not, I think the known generosity and sincerity of Richard's character, ought to free him from such a charge; especially, since the king of France appears to have been the author of the calumny†. Surely it is very unjust, to suspect a man of a crime repugnant to his disposition, on the accusation of a dishonourable enemy.

* De la Ravaliere. See Johnes's Translation of Joinville, vol. ii. p. 278; and Turner, p. 333.

† Turner, p. 326; and Henry, p. 150.

HARRY.

Dishonourable indeed! Since Philip paid no respect to his oaths, I am sure his word was good for nothing. Mamma, do you know that I have a great curiosity to hear something more about this Old Man of the Mountain. Will you be so very kind as to tell us who and what he was?

LUCY.

That is just what I was wishing for; and, you know, it is not going *far* from our subject, since you told us that he was celebrated in the history of those times, and that he interfered in behalf of Richard.

MRS. B.

He was the sovereign of a small district of Phœnicia, and was called, by the eastern writers, *Scheikh-al-gebal*, or Old Man of the Mountain. You must understand that this was the title of his dignity, not the expression of his age. The French word "*seigneur*," though used as a title of dignity, is also derived from *senior*, *old**.

LUCY.

I know you have told us that the first kind of government was the *Patriarchal*, and that authority was founded on respect for age and

* Mrs. B's. account of the Assassins and their Chief, is taken from the Dissertations of De la Ravaliere and Falconet. See Johnes's Joinville, *ib.*

experience; then it was very natural to use a word expressive of age, as a title of dignity. We understand that. And now, dear mamma, about the Old Man of the Mountain?

MRS. B.

In one respect, the power of this Scheikh resembled that of the pope, being founded on the superstition and credulity of his subjects. They were a sect of Mohammedan dissenters, who were educated in the persuasion, that they would enjoy eternal happiness, if they lost their lives in obeying the orders of their sovereign, let them be just or unjust. Thus, if he commanded assassination, that odious crime became a duty of religion to his infatuated subjects; and so frequently were they employed in this way, that they were distinguished by the name of Assassins, from the Arabic word, "*hassa*," to kill. This word has passed into our own language; and you have often heard and read of *assassins*, though you knew nothing of the Old Man of the Mountain, or his devoted subjects.

HARRY.

Well, that is surprising! How often we find that we know nothing of the real, first meaning, of words that seem quite familiar to us! It is shocking to hear of a whole nation of assassins. But go on, mamma: this story interests me.

MRS. B.

Because you think I shall have to relate some tragical adventure, I suppose. Well, there were Assassins both in Persia and in Syria; but I was speaking of the latter, whose Scheikh, or Old Man, is supposed to have inhabited a mountain in the neighbourhood of Cesarea Philippi. His domain is described by William, archbishop of Tyre, who lived at the time of the third Crusade, as consisting of ten castles, built on inaccessible rocks; and some hamlets, scattered through the valleys which separated the mountains. The map we were consulting a little while ago, will give you the best idea of the country of the Assassins: you may consider them as inhabiting the chain of Mount Lebanon and Anti-libanus, from Antioch to Damascus. Their number was estimated at about 60,000.

HARRY.

Thank you, mamma, I see it perfectly. The chain of Mount Lebanon is drawn beautifully in this map.

MRS. B.

Many instances of the implicit devotion of the Assassins to their chief, are recorded in old chronicles. One of these was witnessed by Henry of Champagne, who married the widow of the murdered Conrad. Henry was invited

by the Old Man of the Mountain to pass through his territory. On coming near a certain tower, the chief, who accompanied him, asked if Henry's subjects were as obedient as his were? Without waiting for an answer, he made a signal, and instantly three young men, clothed in white, threw themselves from the top of the tower they were approaching. Such an authority, over a horde of enthusiasts thus devoted to his will, rendered the Scheikh a very formidable enemy, who, from the rocky fastness which he had chosen for his dwelling, seemed to exercise the power of life and death over the other sovereigns of the earth. Bohadin informs us, that the life of Saladin was attempted by his emissaries. But I have said enough on this subject, for the present.

LUCY.

Not quite, mamma. You compared the Old Man of the Mountain to the pope, but you did not show us any resemblance between them.

MRS. B.

Very true, my dear. The pope exercised his power in a different way; but the European sovereigns, who depended upon him, stood as much in awe of his sentence of excommunication, as the Assassins did of the displeasure of their Chief. I compared them, because the power of both was founded on an artful use of

the influence arising from religious impressions. I wish to direct your attention to this, lest you should suppose that the abuse of this influence, by the pope and the clergy of the church of Rome, of which we have lately read so many instances, was an evil peculiar to that form of Christianity, instead of a natural consequence of the ignorance and superstition of the times. You may perceive, from the unlimited power exercised by the Old Man of the Mountain, and from the successful imposture of Mohammed, that when a corrupt religion is under the direction of ambitious men, it becomes a sure and powerful means of tyranny, wherever the people are ignorant and superstitious. If you clearly understand this, we will return to Richard.

LUCY.

I should like to know what became of him, after he had convinced the German princes of his innocence.

MRS. B.

He was released soon afterwards, on the English paying a very large sum for his ransom. The remainder of his life is not particularly interesting. Wars and quarrels, with his brother John and the king of France, prevented his enjoying tranquillity; and in the tenth year

of his reign, while he was besieging an inconsiderable castle belonging to one of his barons, he was wounded in the shoulder, by an arrow from a cross-bow. The castle was taken, and Richard asked the soldier *why he had shot him*. He replied, "With your hand you killed my father and my two brothers: I am willing to suffer the greatest torment you can inflict, so that you die, who have caused so many evils to mankind." The boldness of the soldier surprised Richard into a recollection of his own violent life, and led him to view his fate as a just retribution. He died a few days afterwards, having, with his characteristic generosity, pardoned the man who shot him*.

HARRY.

I like him for that! Oh, depend upon it, he had no share in the murder of Conrad!

MRS. B.

The poor soldier did not profit by his sovereign's generosity: one of Richard's officers put him to a cruel death.

LUCY.

But the king's merit was the same. Poor Cœur de Lion! He did not gain much by all his heroism.

MRS. B.

Richard seems to have been an instrument,

* Turner, p. 334, &c.

in the hand of Providence, for arresting the progress of the Turkish power, when it was becoming formidable to the liberty of Europe. That end accomplished, he sunk into insignificance, affording another proof how little military ambition benefits a nation, or blesses its possessor*. Yet the memory of their lion-hearted prince was long dear and glorious to the English. For this, several reasons, besides his military talents, may be assigned. The character of Richard was noble, compared with that of his successor. He is also thought to have been the first prince of Norman descent, who felt any sincere attachment to the English†. They had esteemed Henry the Second for his justice, and the country prospered under his wise and impartial government; but they believed that Richard loved them, and doubtless this persuasion atoned, in their opinion, for many errors. In Palestine, Cœur de Lion left behind him an impression that long survived himself. He was celebrated in proverbial sayings, by the grandsons of the Turks and Saracens, against whom he had fought. His dreaded name was employed by the Syrian mothers, to silence their froward children; and if a horse suddenly started from the way, his rider would exclaim,

* Turner, p. 336. † Hume, vol. ii. p. 35.

"Dost thou think king Richard is in that bush*?"

LUCY.

So his great achievements procured him the honour of being made a bugbear, to frighten children! Poor Richard! However, the love of his people was worth having, and I am glad that the English were grateful.

MRS. B.

I wish they had had better reason for their gratitude! Richard impoverished his own country, but added nothing to its civilization or prosperity†. In this respect, and in his romantic enterprises, his heroic valour, his unjust imprisonment, and the circumstances of his death, he bears so strong a resemblance to another military sovereign, that Dr. Johnson's beautiful verses are almost equally applicable to both:

"But did not chance at length her error mend?
Did no subverted empire mark his end?
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound,
Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale‡.

*Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 143. † Turner, p. 336

‡ Vanity of Human Wishes.

KING JOHN.

Take again
From this my hand, as holding of the pope,
Your sovereign greatness and authority.
SHAKSPEARE.

LUCY.

I AM afraid the reign of king John will not afford us much pleasure, mamma. We know that he was an ungrateful son, and a treacherous brother; and then, besides all we have heard against him lately, there is the shocking story of prince Arthur, that used to make Harry cry.

HARRY.

That was a great while ago, Lucy, when I thought the story was true. Mamma told me, the other day, that Matthew Paris, an historian who lived in the reign of king John, gives a different account of that affair. He says that John endeavoured to gain the favour of Arthur by kind speeches, but that prince answered him haughtily, and claimed his crown. John was very much disturbed at this, and he sent Arthur

to Rheims, to be kept in close confinement; and accordingly the poor young prince was shut up there. All at once he disappeared; but the manner of his death was unknown to every body*. I think that is a true account of what you told me, mamma.

MRS. B.

Yes, I believe you have faithfully related the substance of what I said. I prefer the account of Matthew Paris, because Lord Clarendon calls him the best author of that time†. After simply stating the fact, which was positively known, that Arthur had disappeared, the historian adds, "I wish it may not be as envious fame reports." This remark alludes to the opinion then generally received, that John was either himself the murderer of his nephew, or else that the crime was committed by his orders. Whatever might be the truth, Philip, king of France, took advantage of the universal indignation which was excited against John, and summoned him, as a feudal vassal of the French crown, to appear at Paris, and defend himself against the charge. Whether John was prevented from obeying this summons by his sense of guilt, or by his pride, we have now no means

* Turner, vol. i. p. 339, *note*.

† See his Religion and Policy, vol. i. p. 141.

of knowing: it is, however, certain that he did not appear, and therefore Normandy was adjudged to be forfeited to king Philip, and from that time the legal title was never restored to the crown of England*. In a little while, John was deprived of all his father's inheritance and acquisitions, except the remote duchy of Guienne. These losses of territory procured him the contemptuous sirname of *Lackland*†.

LUCY.

Ah, mamma! you can find nothing heroic about this John Lackland. We must pass him by.

MRS. B.

By no means, my dear Lucy. The reign of John, weak and vicious as he was, is memorable for the important benefits which were then secured to the nation. It is also remarkable for the greatest stretch of papal power recorded in our history. We must not pass by such things as these; and though John was no hero, I think some of the transactions in which he was concerned, would interest you exceedingly.

HARRY.

Then will you, dearest mother, be so kind as to relate them: you know best what will please us. When Henry Plantagenet died in such

* *Ib.* p. 142; and Turner, p. 340. † *Ib.* p. 341.

affliction, I thought I should not like to hear about any of his sons; but I was very much entertained with the story of Cœur de Lion.

MRS. B.

The other sons of Henry Plantagenet, whatever might be their faults, had some excellencies; but John displayed all the treachery of which a wicked and ambitious character is capable, without any of those splendid qualities by which it is sometimes adorned *.

We have just been speaking of the loss of Normandy, as a consequence of the indignation excited by the fate of Arthur. In England he had also lost the affections of the nobility, and the people in general, so that they refused to assist him, in attempting to recover the possessions of which he had been deprived in France. After this, he came to an agreement with his lords, and took a solemn oath to perform all his promises to them. On the faith of this engagement, they complied with his wishes; but when he had obtained their assistance, he paid no respect to his oath, and the disappointed barons again withdrew from him †.

HARRY.

I think John richly deserved to be forsaken. But what was the stretch of papal power, that you mentioned just now, mamma?

* Turner, p. 338. † Clarendon, p. 143.

Mrs. B.

After the loss of Normandy, the next great event of this disgraceful reign, was the contest between John and the pope, which began on account of the election of an archbishop of Canterbury.

Some of the younger monks of that cathedral secretly chose a person to fill the office of primate. The king knowing nothing of this, procured the election of another person by the convent of Canterbury, but without consulting the bishops of that province, who also claimed their right of choice, and appealed to the pope against both the elections which had taken place. The two persons who had been chosen, each applied to the same authority to confirm his appointment*.

Lucy.

Then there were two archbishops elect, and I do not know how many bishops appealing against both. The pope must have been quite puzzled.

Mrs. B.

The pope of that day was a man not very easily puzzled, I assure you. I must endeavour to make you acquainted with him. On his accession, he took the name of Innocent the Third.

* Turner, p. 342.

He was a man of lofty and enterprising genius, who gave full scope to his ambition; and being elevated to the papal chair, at an earlier period of life than popes were generally chosen, he employed his long pontificate of eighteen years, in advancing his own power, by a skilful management of the events which occurred in the different kingdoms of Europe. He endeavoured to convert the spiritual authority which was allowed him, into a real dominion, and had the boldness to declare, that "no princes or bishops, civil governors or ecclesiastical rulers, have any lawful power, in church or state, but what they derive from the pope*."

HARRY.

That exceeds every thing we have heard yet! At that rate, mamma, the pope would be the only *real* sovereign in Europe.

MRS. B.

That was precisely his intention. The great ability and boundless ambition of Innocent the Third, were rendered still more formidable by his activity, and his habits of industrious application. He heard, in person, the numerous appeals that were made to Rome, and was fully sensible of the increase they afforded to the papal authority. He felt that in consequence of these

* Russel's Mod. Europe, vol. i. p. 318; & Clarendon, p. 135.

appeals he enjoyed a universal influence; and he became bolder in the use of his power, from the respect which was paid to it, and from his habit of exerting it. In the contest I have just mentioned, respecting the see of Canterbury, he not only set aside both the elected candidates, but is said to have privately urged the monks of Canterbury, who were at Rome on account of the appeal, to choose Stephen Langton for their archbishop. The person fixed upon by the pope, was truly worthy of the appointment; but in choosing him, Innocent invaded the rights of the king of England, and of the appealing bishops. The monks, as might be expected, complied with the wishes of the pope, who sent letters to the king, desiring him to receive Langton as archbishop of Canterbury.

On the arrival of these letters, John was transported with fury, and acted with all the violence natural to a weak mind. Had he calmly and prudently opposed the encroachment of the pope, he would probably have succeeded; but he consulted only his passions, and ordered two knights, with their armed followers, to go to Canterbury, and drive all the monks of that convent, as traitors, out of his dominions. These ministers of wrath entered the monastery with drawn swords, and threatened to set fire to the building, unless the offenders departed im-

mediately. The prior and all the monks, except those who were too ill to move, left the convent and were conveyed to Flanders*.

After this rash action, the king despatched an angry letter to the pope. Innocent returned a long answer, in which, after many expressions of resentment, he told John, that if he persisted in this dispute, he would plunge himself into the greatest difficulties, and would at length be crushed by him, before whom every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth†.

LUCY.

Oh, that was very wicked of the pope! Those words are in the New Testament, and they are applied to our Saviour in his state of glory.

MRS. B.

It is indeed a shocking proof of the corruption of religion, that the pope should venture thus to appropriate the honours due to the great Head of the church.

HARRY.

Well, mamma, how did the quarrel proceed?

MRS. B.

These letters of John and the pope were, in fact, a declaration of war between them; but they engaged in the contest on very unequal

* Turner, p. 342—344. † Henry, p. 313.

terms. Innocent had now attained that extravagant height of power, which made the greatest monarchs tremble; and John had sunk very low, both in reputation and authority. The pope, sensible of his own advantages, and of the weakness of his enemy, proceeded to extremities, and laid the kingdom under an interdict. This sentence was published in England, on the 23d of March, 1208, by three English bishops, acting under the pope's authority *.

HARRY.

What do you mean by *an interdict*, mamma? That is quite a new word to us.

MRS. B.

I think you must know that the general meaning of *to interdict*, is *to forbid*. I will endeavour to explain what was meant by *an interdict* in the days of papal power.

The nation was suddenly deprived of all the public exercises of religion. This was the thing forbidden, or interdicted. The manner in which the sentence was executed, was artfully calculated to strike the senses in the highest degree, and to make a powerful impression on the minds of a superstitious people. The altars were deprived of their ornaments; the crosses, the relics, the images of the saints, were laid on the

* Henry, p. 313.

ground; and, as if the very air had been profaned, and might pollute these holy things, the priests carefully covered them up, even from their own sight. The use of bells entirely ceased in the churches: they were removed from the steeples, and laid on the ground with the other sacred utensils. The church doors were shut while mass was celebrated, which none but the priests were permitted to attend. The laity were deprived of all religious rites, except baptism of new-born infants, and the communion to the dying. But though the severity of this sentence was thus relaxed in favour of the departing spirit, no respect was paid to the feelings of surviving friends. The dead were not interred in the usual cemeteries, but thrown into ditches, or buried in the common fields, without any religious ceremony. The people were forbidden to eat meat, (as is customary in catholic countries during Lent,) and they were debarred from all pleasures and amusements. Every thing wore the appearance of a heavy national calamity, and of the immediate apprehension of divine vengeance*.

LUCY.

It was very unjust of the pope to punish a whole nation in that manner, because the king

* Russel, *ib.* p. 319, &c.

had offended him! But surely the English could not bear to live in such a shocking state: John must have been obliged to give up.

MRS. B.

He held out for two years, revenging these proceedings by banishing the prelates, seizing the possessions of the clergy, and exposing them to a variety of ill-treatment. At the expiration of that time, the pope ventured to exercise the utmost rigour of his assumed authority: he excommunicated John, (I have explained that term to you before,) absolved the people from their oath of allegiance, and soon afterwards deposed the king*.

HARRY.

That means, would not suffer him to reign any longer. But how could the pope manage to do that?

MRS. B.

The execution of this sentence required an armed force, and the pontiff chose the king of France to be the instrument of his will. In order to secure his ready compliance, he not only promised that Philip should be forgiven for all his sins, but that he should possess the kingdom of England as the reward of his obedience†.

* Turner, p. 344, &c. † Russel, p. 321.

HARRY.

I think Philip was very foolish, if he accepted of any such terms. How could he tell but the pope might some time or other publish such a sentence against himself.

MRS. B.

Very true, Harry. It was evidently the interest of all Christian princes to oppose these encroachments. But ambition is generally short-sighted, and Philip was seduced by the prospect of present interest to accept the offer. He prepared a force which seemed equal to the greatness of the enterprise. John, on his part, summoned his vassals to meet him at Dover, and from them he selected an army of sixty thousand men: he had also a formidable fleet at Portsmouth.

A decisive action was now expected to take place; but it was not Innocent's intention that the contest should terminate to the advantage of Philip. He despatched Pandolfo as his legate to England, who, in his passage through France, observed Philip's great preparations, and highly commended his zeal and diligence. He crossed over to Dover, under pretence of treating with the English barons in favour of the king of France, and on his arrival had a conference with John. He magnified to that weak prince the number of his enemies, and the disaffection of

his own subjects; and then told him that there was only one way to escape the impending danger, and this was to put himself under the protection of the pope, who, like a kind and merciful father, was still willing to receive him to his bosom.

King John was so bewildered by his fears, that he accepted the artful proposal, and basely agreed to hold his dominions as a vassal of the Roman pontiff. In consequence of this arrangement, he did homage to Pandolfo, as the representative of the pope, with all the humiliating ceremonies required by the feudal law. He came disarmed into the presence of the legate, who was seated on a throne, and threw himself on his knees before him: then lifting up his joined hands, he put them between those of Pandolfo, and swore fealty to the pope in these words: "I John, by the grace of God, king of England, and lord of Ireland, for the expiation of my sins, and out of my own free will, with the advice and consent of my barons, give to the church of Rome, and to Pope Innocent the Third and his successors, the kingdom of England and Ireland, with all the rights belonging to them; and I will hold them of the pope, as his vassal. I will be faithful to God, to the church of Rome, to the pope my lord, and to

his successors, lawfully elected; and I bind myself to pay him a tribute of one thousand marks of silver yearly; namely, seven hundred for the kingdom of England, and three hundred for Ireland."

Part of the money was immediately paid to the legate, as an earnest of the subjection of the kingdom. The English crown and sceptre were then delivered to Pandolfo. The insolent Italian trampled the money under his feet, to show the new vassal's dependant state. The crown and sceptre he kept for five days, and then returned them to John, as a favour from the pope*.

HARRY.

John was a dastardly fellow, to accept them on any such terms. And what did his barons say? Was there no English spirit in those days?

MRS. B.

It would be a more regular way of telling my story, to inform you what the king of France said, who was waiting impatiently at Boulogne, for the return of Pandolfo. At length he arrived, and told Philip that he must lay aside all thoughts of attacking England, for it was now a fief of the church of Rome, and its king a vassal of the pope. Enraged and astonished, Philip swore that he would not be the dupe of

* Russel, p. 321, &c.

such hypocritical pretences; nor would he have desisted from his enterprise, if a new enemy had not engaged his attention*.

HARRY.

I do not care what became of Philip, mamma. Will you tell us whether the English were as mean-spirited as their king.

MRS. B.

Let us first settle John's affairs with the church. You know he had been under sentence of excommunication, and the pope had deposed him; but now that he acknowledged himself a vassal of Rome, the case was altered, and Innocent willingly restored his regal title. The exiled prelates returned in triumph, with Langton, the new archbishop, at their head. When the king heard they were approaching, he went to meet them, and throwing himself on the ground before them, he entreated, with tears, that they would have compassion on him, and on the kingdom of England. The primate then led this abject monarch to the chapter-house of Winchester, and there administered an oath to him, by which he again swore fealty to the pope and his successors, promised to love and defend the holy church and clergy; and engaged that

* Russel, p. 323.

he would re-establish the good laws of his predecessors, especially those of Edward the Confessor, and that he would abolish the wicked laws. After he had made this engagement, and expressed his resolution to maintain justice and right in his dominions, Langton gave him absolution in the usual form, and admitted the restored monarch to dine with him, to the great joy of all the people*.

HARRY.

Oh, foolish people! how was it possible they could care a farthing for such a contemptible king?

MRS. B.

One of the good effects arising from the feudal system, was that peculiar sentiment of reverence and attachment for the sovereign, which we call *loyalty*. It was a very powerful feeling, which could make the bravest men put up with slights and ill-treatment from their king, and induce them to make the most generous and disinterested exertions, for one in whose character there was nothing to esteem. In barbarous ages, when the principles of justice were but little regarded, loyalty was one of the great preservatives of peace and good order in society; and, even now, when the rights

* Hume, vol. ii. p. 75, &c.

and duties of the king and the subject are better understood, the spirit of loyalty is essential to the tranquillity and security of every monarchy*.

It was in the fifteenth year of the reign of king John, that his subjects expressed such joy at his reconciliation with the clergy: a proof that their long experience of his folly, vice, and tyranny, had not yet overcome the strong feelings of loyalty in their hearts; and had he then kept his engagements, they would, in all probability, have respected his authority. But the barons, who well knew how little dependance was to be placed on his word, determined to obtain a regular confirmation of their just rights. The oath lately taken by the king, afforded a sufficient ground for them to present a petition, claiming a renewal of the charter of Henry the First, and a confirmation of the laws of Edward the Confessor. The king, alarmed at this firm assertion of their rights, required some delay, but promised to return a positive answer at an appointed time. The barons accepted the proposal, and peaceably returned to their castles†.

LUCY.

That does not appear as if they wished to

* Hallam, vol. i. p. 228, &c. † Hume, p. 80.

quarrel with him. But will you explain one thing, mamma? In the oath of fealty, which John took to Pandolfo, he declares that he gives England and Ireland to the pope, *with the advice and consent of his barons.* If this was true, they were as contemptible as he.

MRS. B.

History informs us, that *four* barons took that disgraceful oath along with the king; but the whole affair seems to have been viewed in a proper light by the English in general, who thought the reign of a king weak enough thus to resign the independence of the country, afforded a favourable opportunity for placing their rights and liberties on a more secure foundation*.

HARRY.

What foundation was that, mamma?

MRS. B.

After a short struggle, the barons succeeded in obtaining from the king the famous MAGNA CHARTA, or *Great Charter*, which either granted or secured very important privileges to every order of free men in the kingdom: to the barons, the clergy, and the people†.

When we go to London, I hope to take you to the British Museum, where you may see an

* Hume, p. 71 and 78. † Russel, p. 324.

original copy of Magna Charta, preserved with the greatest care.

LUCY.

That must be a curiosity indeed. I should like to see it very much!

HARRY.

I should like to see it a great deal better, if you would tell us, mamma, what were the advantages that the nation gained by it. If we do not know that, it will be only looking at an old parchment.

MRS. B.

Very true, Harry. To-morrow, if you remind me of it, I hope I shall be able to make you understand some of the privileges, which every Englishman enjoys from the grant of Magna Charta.

As it is now growing late, I will only tell you, that John in a few hours repented of what he had done; and after a sleepless night, he set out for the Isle of Wight, where he hid himself for three months, brooding over plans of revenge, and associating with fishermen and sailors. While he was in this concealment, he sent ambassadors to Rome, to request that the pope would condemn the Charter. The pontiff readily pronounced it to be void. After this, John engaged in a war against his barons; but, happily for the nation, he died in the course of

the following year*: leaving behind him the reputation of being the worst subject and the worst son, the worst brother and the worst friend, the worst king and the worst Christian, that had ever sat upon the throne of England†.

* Turner, p. 353—357. † Clarendon, p. 148, &c.

MAGNA CHARTA.

Hail! sacred Polity, by Freedom rear'd!
Hail! sacred Freedom, when by law restrain'd!
Without you what were man? A grovelling herd,
In darkness, wretchedness, and want enchain'd.

BEATTIE.

HARRY.

NOW, dear mamma, I hope you are ready to tell us what we have gained by the grant of Magna Charta.

MRS. B.

I think you will understand the subject better, if we first go back to the time of our favourite Alfred. I will endeavour to give you some idea of the most remarkable changes that took place in the laws of this country, between his reign and that of John. You will then have a better notion of that state of things which induced the barons to demand a clearer acknowledgment of the rights of the people, than had before been obtained.

HARRY.

Thank you, mamma. I hope I shall understand it as well as I did your account of the different classes of Alfred's subjects, and his division of the kingdom into hundreds and tithings. That was not at all difficult.

MRS. B.

I hope what I am now going to say will not puzzle you. Before I proceed any further, I must caution you against falling into a very natural mistake respecting Alfred's division of the kingdom. You should understand, that he was never master of more than half of England; and therefore the complete distribution of this country, into the districts you have just mentioned, must have been the work of a later period*.

So little is known of the state in which Alfred found the laws of his country, that it is impossible for us to say, with any certainty, which of those laws originated with him. We have seen that, on many occasions, he appeared more anxious to improve existing institutions, than to form new ones. The undoubted and peculiar praise of Alfred is, that, after having corrected the faults of his education and temper, he redeemed the English from servitude, and their name

* Hallam, vol. ii. p. 138.

from extinction: that he was the liberal promoter of useful knowledge, and the watchful guardian of justice and public order. These are the important benefits which make us esteem Alfred as the best and greatest of English kings*. On them, you will find our best historians agree: on what is exactly due to him as a legislator, they differ considerably.

I have told you† of that cruel massacre by which Ethelred the Unready drew upon his native land the horrors of the Danish invasion. Canute introduced new customs, which changed for a while many of the usages of the Saxons. When the Danes were expelled, the English returned to their ancient laws; but retained a few of the Danish customs, which went under the name of the *Dane-Lage*. The laws compiled or improved by Alfred, were called the *West-Saxon-Lage;* and the constitution of the ancient kingdom of Mercia, which prevailed in the counties nearest to Wales, and probably abounded with British customs, was called the *Mercen-Lage*. So that three distinct bodies of laws prevailed at once, in different parts of England‡.

* Hallam, vol. ii. p. 146. † See the story of Harold

‡ Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iv. p. 411, &c.

LUCY.

That must have been extremely awkward and inconvenient; especially if people had occasion to remove to another part of the country.

MRS. B.

It appears to have caused some perplexity; for Edward the Confessor undertook the labour of completing a body of laws, to be observed throughout the whole kingdom. This was probably a revival of Alfred's code, including such of the Mercian and Danish customs, as were reasonable and well approved. These laws of Edward the Confessor are believed to have been the origin of an admirable system of maxims and unwritten customs, now known by the name of the *common law*, as extending its authority over the whole kingdom*. In the history of England, you will often find these customs mentioned as the laws of Edward the Confessor†.

HARRY.

We read, in the story of Alfred, that *his* institutions were the origin of the common law. How is this, mamma?

MRS. B.

Some writers ascribe that honour to Alfred, others to Edward the Confessor; but it is a

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 412. † *Ib.* vol. i. p. 66.

point of no importance, since the laws of the Confessor are acknowledged to be a revival of those of Alfred.

HARRY.

It is of some importance to me, mamma; because I do not like my favourite to be deprived of any praise that is justly due to him.

MRS. B.

In the story of Alfred, I explained some of the peculiarities of the Anglo Saxon government, therefore I need not say much more on that subject: when you are a few years older, you will probably search into these affairs for yourselves. But I fancy you would like to understand how trials were conducted among our ancestors. You have heard of the trial by jury: the most ancient species of trial was that by *ordeal.* This was of two sorts, either *fire*-ordeal, or *water*-ordeal. The ordeal by *fire*, was confined to persons of higher rank; that by *water*, to the common people*.

HARRY.

I cannot imagine how people could be *tried* by fire and water, though they might be *punished* by being burned or drowned. Will you tell us how these trials were managed, dear mamma?

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 342.

Mrs. B.

Fire-ordeal was performed by the accused, or his deputy, taking up in the hand, unhurt, a piece of red-hot iron, of one, two, or three pounds weight: or else by walking, barefoot and blindfold, over nine red-hot ploughshares, laid lengthwise, at unequal distances. If the accused escaped unhurt, he was judged to be innocent; but if it happened otherwise, as without some unfair contrivance it generally did, he was then condemned as guilty*.

Harry.

By the first plan, every body exposed to the trial must have been condemned, unless the accused was saved by a miracle, like the Jews that Nebuchadnezzar threw into the furnace; and by the second, there was hardly a chance of escape.

Mrs. B.

That a miracle would be wrought, in order to save the innocent, was the very thing which was expected. One cannot help being surprised at the folly and impiety of supposing, that the ordinary course of nature should be suspended, whenever it was presumptuously required. Yet such was the superstition and ignorance of our countrymen, that this strange mode of trial was

* Blackstone, *ib.* p. 343.

not entirely abolished till the reign of Henry the Third*.

LUCY.

I am very glad that people have grown so much wiser. But do not forget the water-ordeal, mamma.

MRS. B.

Water-ordeal was performed, either by plunging the naked arm, up to the elbow, in boiling water, and escaping unhurt; or by throwing the accused person into a river or pond: if he floated, without using any action of swimming, he was deemed guilty; but if he sunk, he was acquitted†.

HARRY.

Then the poor fellow must be half drowned, to prove his innocence. It makes me feel ashamed of our Saxon ancestors, to think they could believe such foolishness!

MRS. B.

Perhaps it may be some comfort to you to know, that the trial by ordeal was not a superstition *peculiar* to the Anglo Saxons. It not only prevailed in the other countries of Europe, at that time, but was known to the ancient Greeks; for Sophocles, (an Athenian poet, who lived in the time of Pericles,) in his tragedy of

* Blackstone, *ib.* p. 344, &c. † *Ib.* vol. iv. p. 343.

Antigone, makes a suspected person declare his readiness "to handle hot iron, and walk over fire," in order to prove his innocence. And we are further told, that this was a customary mode of *purgation*, or clearing the character from the imputation of guilt.

A strange kind of water-ordeal is said to be practised by the Indians of the coast of Malabar, where a person accused of any enormous crime, is obliged to swim over a large river, abounding with crocodiles: if he escapes unhurt, he is pronounced innocent*.

LUCY.

It seems very strange that people, who, like the Anglo Saxons, understood the advantages of trial by jury, should not always prefer the opinion of twelve honest men, to such foolish experiments.

MRS. B.

You have touched on a difficult subject, Lucy. It appears doubtful, whether what we have been accustomed to call trial by jury, among our Saxon ancestors, had more than a general resemblance to that institution as it exists at present. Those decisions, which some historians have considered as instances of trial by jury, others have supposed to refer to an

* Blackstone, *ib.* p. 344.

ancient custom called *compurgation*, or wager of law*. I will endeavour to explain it to you.

HARRY.

Indeed, mamma, such odd words do require some explanation!

MRS. B.

I was going to explain the *thing;* but I will begin with the *word*, if it puzzles you. *Compurgation* is the practice of supporting the truth of any man's assertion, by the testimony of another person. He who performs this service to another, is called a *compurgator*. By the old Saxon constitution, every man's credit in a court of law, depended on the opinion entertained by his neighbours of his strict regard to truth. The manner in which the defendant gave security that what he asserted was true, is particularly described in the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum the Dane. He was to take into court with him eleven of his neighbours, and after he had asserted, on oath, his innocence of the charge brought against him, his eleven neighbours declared, also upon their oaths, that they believed in their consciences he had spoken the truth. This was called *the wager of law*, and the oaths of these eleven compurgators, were considered equal to a verdict in favour of the defendant†. You see,

* *Ib.* vol. iv. p. 414; and Hallam, p. 142, &c.

† Blackstone, vol. iii. p. 343.

these men did not give judgment from the evidence before them, like a modern jury; but were more properly witnesses, brought by the defendant in support of his own character*.

LUCY.

And those witnesses were chosen by the accused. That is very different from the opinion of twelve impartial men, who consider both sides of the question.

MRS. B.

Beside the oaths of the defendant and his compurgators, a prodigious number of witnesses, sometimes more than a thousand, appeared on both sides, who also gave testimony upon oath. The effect of all this swearing was, to weaken the influence of oaths: when they became so familiar, they ceased to be a restraint. So that, besides the impiety of thus continually using the awful name of the Deity in the disputes of men, *perjury*, or swearing falsely, became one of the most prevailing vices of the age†.

HARRY.

I suppose lying was equally common, or else they would not have had so much occasion to swear. England wanted a few Petrarchs, in those days.

* Henry, vol. ii. p. 301. † *Ib.* p. 302.

LUCY.

What do you mean? He was a poet, and poets are not always remarkable for accuracy.

HARRY.

Take care how you slander poets, Lucy. Alfred was a poet, but he was called Alfred *the Truth-teller*. Petrarch "was a poet," and yet Cardinal Colonna made every body else, even his own brother the bishop, swear to speak the whole truth; but when Petrarch's turn came, he shut the book and said, "As to you, Petrarch, your *word* is sufficient *."

MRS. B.

That is a remarkable anecdote, and more to the honour of Petrarch than the finest of his poems. The poets are much obliged to you, Harry. But do not let us wander too far from our subject. We will now review the second period of our history.

The important changes produced by the Norman conquest, were probably little expected by the English, or they would not so readily have yielded the crown to William, who, in receiving it, bound himself by an oath exactly similar to the coronation oath of the Saxon kings†.

* Percival's Tales, p. 29. † Hallam, vol. ii. p. 159, &c.

HARRY.

He did not pay much respect to that oath; for we know that he was cruel and tyrannical.

MRS. B.

The beginning of William's government was tolerably equitable; but the yoke soon became heavy, and the English were treated like a conquered people*. You have heard how rigidly they were excluded from every dignity in the church or state.

HARRY.

Oh, yes! we know that Becket was the first Englishman, after the conquest, who obtained any considerable power.

MRS. B.

I have also told you of the separation of the ecclesiastical from the civil courts, which, by rendering the clergy independent of the laws, occasioned so many evils. Another alteration of the English constitution, consisted in appropriating large districts to the purposes of hunting, and subjecting them, and all the ancient forests of the kingdom, to severe and unreasonble laws. In the Saxon times, though no man was allowed to kill or chase the king's deer, he might start any game, pursue it, and kill it, on his own estate. But these new laws made

* Hallam, vol. ii. p. 159, &c.

the king the sole proprietor of all the game in England; and no man was entitled to disturb any fowl of the air, or any beast of the field, of such kinds as were reserved for the amusement of the sovereign, without his express licence*. Before the grant of Magna Charta, the king might make what laws he pleased for the protection of his forests: these laws were executed with such severity, that they were objects of terror, and sources of distress, to those who lived in the neighbourhood of the royal forests†. A man who killed a stag or a boar, was punished with the loss of his eyes; for, according to the report of the Saxon Chronicle, "William loved the great game, as if he had been their father‡."

HARRY.

I think, from what I have read in the newspapers, about game-keepers and poachers, there must be some strange laws about game, even now, in spite of Magna Charta.

MRS. B.

Our present game-laws seem to have sprung from the same unreasonable notions of property in wild creatures; but with this difference—the ancient forest-laws established only one mighty

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 415. † Henry, vol. iii. p. 383.

‡ Hallam, p. 163.

hunter throughout the land, the game-laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor*."

A third alteration in the English laws, consisted in lessening the power of the county courts, which were the chief seats of justice among the Saxons. Now arose the boundless influence of the grand justiciary. These officers did not all of them resemble Richard de Lucy†: they sometimes abused their enormous power, and exercised the most odious tyranny‡. A remarkable instance of this, occurred in the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion. That monarch left his chancellor, Longchamp, joint regent and justiciary with the bishop of Durham, to govern England during his absence in Palestine. Longchamp excluded his colleague from the exercise of authority, and behaved with such insolence and tyranny, that the nobility, who then constituted the parliament, passed a sentence of removal and banishment upon Longchamp. Prince John lent his sanction to this proceeding. It is a remarkable fact, that he, who was himself such a tyrant, should not only have been compelled to grant the charter of our liberties; but that he should, before he ascended the throne, of his own free will, have

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 416.

† See the Story of Thomas Becket. ‡ Blackstone, *ib.*

assisted in affording the earliest example of a leading principle in the English constitution:—*that ministers are accountable to parliament for their conduct**.

HARRY.

Ah! that is an excellent thing! Then, if the parliament will but do its duty, the English must always be a free people.

MRS. B.

A fourth change, was the introduction of trial by combat, instead of the ancient ordeal†. This trial, like the ordeal, was founded on the supposition that the Almighty would always interpose, and give victory to the innocent. Therefore, if the person accused was victorious, he was acquitted of the crime with which he had been charged; if he was defeated, he was deemed guilty, and subjected to the punishment prescribed by law for his offence. If he was killed in the combat, his death was considered as the proof and punishment of his guilt. If the combatants were vassals of the crown, they fought before the king, the constable, and the marshal of England, who were the judges. But if the combatants were the vassals of a baron, they fought in his presence‡.

* Hallam, *ib.* p. 176, &c. † Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 418.
‡ Henry, *ib.* p. 355.

Whoever came off victorious, was pronounced to be acquitted *by the judgment of God**.

The last and most important alteration, was the introduction of the feudal system, in its greatest rigour. In other feudal countries, the oath of fealty was due from the vassal to the lord of whom he held his land, and to no other person. But William received at Salisbury, in the year 1085, the fealty of all the landholders in England, both those who held their lands immediately from the crown, and their tenants†.

In this reign, the nation groaned under as absolute a slavery, as it was in the power of a warlike, ambitious, politic prince, to organize. The consciences of men were enslaved by priests devoted to a foreign power, and uncontrolled by the laws of England. These priests imported from Rome many new superstitions and opinions: among others, the worship of saints and images, and the doctrine of the supreme authority of the pope. The laws and the public prayers were administered in an unknown tongue. The trial by jury was laid aside, for the impious decision by single combat. The forest-laws deprived the people of their favourite amusement of hunting; and those who lived in towns, were obliged to dismiss their visiters, and put out

* Robertson's Charles V. vol. i. p. 60. † Hallam, p. 166.

their fires and candles, at the sound of the melancholy curfeu*.

HARRY.

Ah! I remember the meaning of curfeu: you explained it when we learned "Gray's Elegy."

MRS. B.

A still greater evil of the Anglo Norman government, was the sale of public justice. A man could not obtain his right without paying a fine†. And to crown all, as a consequence of that feudal tenure, by which each knight owed military service to the king, he had always ready at his command, an army of sixty thousand knights, who were bound, on pain of forfeiting their estates, to attend him in time of invasion, or to quell any insurrection. Trade, such as it was, was then carried on by the Jews and Lombards: the name of an English fleet was unknown in Europe. The nation consisted of the clergy, who were also the lawyers; the barons, or great lords of the land; the knights, or soldiery, who were the inferior landholders; and the burghers, or lowest tradesmen, who, from their insignificance, happily retained some portion of their ancient liberty. All the rest were villeins, or slaves.

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 419. † Hallam, p. 171.

From this state of servile degradation, our ancestors have, by slow degrees, raised themselves and their descendants to that freedom which we now enjoy. We may consider it as a gradual restoration of that ancient constitution, of which the Anglo Saxons were unjustly deprived by the Norman conquest*.

HARRY.

I should like to know *how* the English regained their liberty. Will you try to explain it, mamma?

MRS. B.

Willingly, so far as I am capable of explaining, and you of understanding it.

William Rufus proceeded on his father's plan, and in some respects extended it, especially with regard to the forest laws. His brother and successor, Henry the First, endeavoured to secure the favour of the people, by a promise of restoring the laws of Edward the Confessor. The truth seems to be, that he gave his subjects a charter, which freed them from some of the most oppressive feudal exactions, but still reserving his claim to military service. He also abolished the curfeu: when it is spoken of after his reign, it is used to denote a known time of the evening. A code of laws is still in being,

* Blackstone, *ib.* &c.

bearing the name of Henry the First, but falling very short of a restitution of those of Edward the Confessor.

We may pass over the reign of Stephen; for though, like other usurpers, he promised much, he performed but little*.

LUCY.

Then came our Henry Plantagenet, and he performed a great deal; for, you know, he gained more love, and did more good, than any king of England since the days of Alfred †.

MRS. B.

Yes, Henry the Second was unquestionably the best of the Anglo Norman kings: in his reign much was done to improve the laws and to enforce their execution. You have read that he voluntarily renewed the charter of his grandfather, king Henry the First. By the Constitutions of Clarendon, he greatly checked the power of the pope and the clergy; though the fatal consequence of his quarrel with Becket, prevented his proceeding, as he probably would have done, in limiting the encroachments of the church. Another improvement effected by Henry, was the introduction and establishment

* Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 420, &c.

† See the Story of Henry Plantagenet.

of the grand assize; a mode of trial by jury, which was offered to the choice of the accused, instead of the barbarous custom of single combat. Four knights were appointed, who chose twelve others to be joined with them; and these sixteen persons constituted the grand assize, or great jury, which must still consist of sixteen persons*. It was Henry Plantagenet who first accepted of a sum of money, instead of personal military service. In process of time, this gave rise to the subsidies, or grants of money, which the parliament bestowed on the crown. From this root also sprung the land-tax of later times†.

LUCY.

I shall think of Henry Plantagenet with a great deal of pleasure, whenever I hear papa say that he has paid the land-tax. How much better that is, than if he was obliged to go for a soldier!

MRS. B.

Richard Cœur de Lion was very fond of hunting, and he enforced the forest laws with some rigour, which occasioned many discontents among the people; but, according to the account of Matthew Paris, he repealed those shocking penalties decreeing the loss of eyes, and cutting off hands and feet, which were before inflicted

* Blackstone, vol. iii. p. 351. † *Ib.* vol. iv. p. 423.

on such as transgressed in hunting. With regard to courts of justice, nothing remarkable occurred in this reign, the king's thoughts being chiefly occupied with Saladin and the Crusade*.

The English began now to look back to a more ancient standard of law. The Norman conquest, and the oppressive exactions that followed it, had endeared the memory of their Saxon government. Its disorders were forgotten, or were less odious to a rude nation, than the harsh justice by which they were afterwards restrained. Hence it became the favourite cry, to demand the laws of Edward the Confessor. What those laws were, was not, perhaps, distinctly understood. In claiming them, our ancestors meant nothing more than the redress of those grievances which, tradition informed them, had not always existed†.

In the reign of John, the exactions practised by the former Norman kings, were redoubled, and mingled with other outrages still more intolerable; and all this was endured for sixteen years with astonishing forbearance, though inflicted by a monarch utterly contemptible for his folly and cowardice‡.

At length, Stephen Langton, the new archbishop, in an assembly of the barons and prelates,

* Blackstone, *ib.* † Hallam, p. 175, &c. ‡ *Ib.* p. 177.

reminded them that the king had sworn to destroy all bad laws, and to re-establish the good ones. "I have found," added he, "the charter of Henry the First, by which, if you choose, you may recall the lost liberties to their former state." He produced it, and it was read. The barons heard it with great joy, and swore at a fit season to contend for these liberties, even to death. Langton promised them his help, and the assembly broke up*.

LUCY.

I did not expect to hear of an archbishop appointed by the pope, befriending the cause of liberty.

MRS. B.

Such an example as that of Langton, should teach us caution and candour in judging of others. We should wait to see how a man will act, before we decide upon his character. Our good archbishop exerted himself so nobly, and so wisely, in behalf of the nation, that we must ever look upon him as one of our greatest benefactors.

HARRY.

It was very strange that the pope should choose such a man. Do you know how it happened, mamma?

* Turner, p. 348.

Mrs. B.

Stephen Langton was an Englishman by birth, but received his education in the university of Paris: there he was for some time employed in teaching divinity, and explaining the Scriptures. In this situation his character was so highly respected, that he was chosen chancellor of the university, and obtained some dignities in the French church. At length, the fame of his abilities and learning induced Innocent the Third to send for him to Rome, where he created him a cardinal. When the dispute arose about the see of Canterbury, the pope fixed upon Stephen Langton to fill the vacant archbishopric; probably thinking, that as he owed his elevation entirely to papal favour, he would, in his future conduct, be influenced by the will and the interest of his patron. Langton came over to his native land, and took possession of his see; but no sooner did he become an English baron, than he appears to have been inspired with a zealous attachment to the liberties and independence of his country. He not only assisted the barons in the recovery of their rights, but opposed the tyranny of the pope's legate, who assumed the power of regulating the affairs of the English church, in the most arbitrary manner, without consulting either the archbishop or the clergy. We shall have oc-

casion to mention the name of Stephen Langton repeatedly, as we proceed in our historical inquiries; and you will hear it with more interest, now you have some idea of his character. I will tell you one other circumstance, which is not connected with our story, but may often bring this great man to your recollection. Much of his time was employed in the study of the Scriptures; and the first division of the books of the Old and New Testaments into chapters, is ascribed to him*.

HARRY.

Then we are greatly obliged to him; for that division makes it much easier to find any passage that we want. And now, dearest mother, will you tell us how Langton and the barons proceeded in the affair of Magna Charta?

MRS. B.

They presented their petition at London, on the 6th of January, 1215. The king at first wished to defer the question, but at length pledged himself to give a satisfactory answer at Easter. At the appointed time, the barons assembled with a strong force at Stamford. John, who was at Oxford, sent ambassadors to them, to ask what was their object. They presented the charter, which they boldly re-

* Aikin's Biog. Dict.

quested him to grant. He answered, that they might as well require his kingdom, as these unjust exactions. The barons appointed Robert Fitzwalter their leader and marshal, and began hostilities. They were soon invited to London, and the concurrence of the citizens of the metropolis decided the contest. The king sent to desire that a place of friendly conference might be appointed *. The barons named Runny-mead, or Rune-meed, which, in the Saxon language, signified *the meadow of counsel;* because, in ancient times, it had been usual to consult there, upon business which concerned the peace of the kingdom. This custom had not prevailed under the Norman government †; but it seems natural for the barons to have desired the restitution of Saxon liberty, in the ancient place of Saxon councils.

HARRY.

I think we understand all the circumstances now, mamma. We are come quite up to Magna Charta itself. What were the privileges that the barons gained by it?

MRS. B.

Those privileges were not confined to the barons, my dear boy. An equal distribution

* Turner, p. 349. † Lyttelton's Henry II. vol. iii. p. 217.

of civil rights, to all classes of freemen, forms the peculiar beauty of the charter*. When you are older, you may enter more fully into the subject; at present, it is sufficient for you to have a clear idea of such parts of the charter as are easy to understand. It declared:

That no taxes were to be imposed but by parliament, except in case of redeeming the king from captivity, making his son a knight, or marrying his eldest daughter; and for these, the sum demanded was to be reasonable.

That the king should not sell, deny, or delay right or justice to any one.

That one measure and one weight were to be used throughout the kingdom.

That all merchants might safely come to England, and go from it, remain in it, and travel through it, to buy and sell, according to the ancient and right customs. Foreign merchants from a hostile country might be arrested, till it was known how English merchants were treated in their country.

* Hallam, p. 178.

That the city of London, and all other cities, towns, and ports, were to have all their liberties and free customs*.

And LASTLY, which alone would have merited the title that it bears of the GREAT CHARTER, it protected every individual of the nation in the free enjoyment of his life, his liberty, and his property, unless declared to be forfeited by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land†.

LUCY.

I suppose *the judgment of his peers*, means the opinion of a jury: does it not, mamma?

MRS. B.

It does; and this is the great bulwark of English liberty. No man can be punished for any capital crime, till the truth of the accusation is confirmed by the united opinion of twelve of his equals, or neighbours, chosen indifferently, and superior to all suspicion of partiality. The liberties of England are therefore secure, so long as this noble institution remains sacred and inviolable‡. If every law that has been made since the grant of Magna Charta were to be swept away, there would still remain the bold features

* Turner, p. 350, &c. † Blackstone, vol. iv. p. 424.
‡ Blackstone, *ib.* p. 349, &c.

which distinguish a free people from the subjects of a despotic monarchy. You may, perhaps, if you attend to general conversation, hear some persons speak slightly of Magna Charta, as if it had sprung from the private ambition of a few selfish barons, and had redressed only some feudal oppressions. But these are *ungrateful* reflections, since *all* classes of freemen were benefited by the Charter. Surely, in this solicitude for the people, and in the moderation which respected the just rights of the sovereign, we can perceive nothing like selfishness, but the spirit of liberality and true patriotism *.

HARRY.

I shall always respect the memory of those generous barons. I wish I knew all their names and characters.

MRS. B.

I cannot satisfy your curiosity on that point, my dear boy; but I believe, from historical testimony, that two great men, the pillars of our church and state, may be considered as entitled, beyond all others, to the glory of this transaction. One of them was William earl of Pembroke, the other you may guess.

HARRY.

I will tell you: it must have been Stephen

* Hallam, p. 177, &c.

Langton, the good archbishop of Canterbury! And this was the reason you were so particular in telling us his history.

MRS. B.

You are right, Harry. It was to their enlightened and temperate zeal for a legal government, that England was indebted, at that critical period, for two of the greatest blessings that patriotic statesmen could confer: the firm establishment of civil liberty, and the preservation of our national independence, under the ancient line of sovereigns, which rasher men were about to exchange for the dominion of France*.

LUCY.

For the dominion of *France*, mamma! That seems unaccountable.

MRS. B.

It is not more strange than true. I told you that John almost immediately repented of what he had done, and applied to his lord, the pope, for assistance. Innocent suspended the archbishop of Canterbury from the discharge of his sacred duties, and excommunicated the barons who took up arms in defence of their claims: John advanced against them with an army of foreign mercenaries, who, by his orders, pillaged

* Hallam, p. 178.

the baronial possessions. Thus driven to extremities by the pope and the king, the barons agreed to choose Louis, son of the king of France, for their sovereign. That prince accepted the offer, and landed in the isle of Thanet with a considerable force: he took Rochester, and proceeded to London, where the barons received him with acclamations, and united their forces with his. The country was suffering all the desolations of civil war, when the sudden death of the king changed the face of affairs. Some of the barons were still for conferring the sovereignty upon Louis; but, happily, more prudent councils prevailed, and the crown was suffered to descend to the rightful heir, Henry, the son of John, who at that time was only nine years old*.

HARRY.

Then the archbishop and the barons could do as they pleased for some years, at any rate. What happened afterwards, mamma?

MRS. B.

Perhaps we may talk of that at some future time, but I am not anxious to hurry you forward. We have arrived at the most important æra of our early history. From this period a new soul seemed to be infused into the people of

* Turner, p. 355—359.

England: they acted from a sense of acknowledged rights; and their vague wishes for the restitution of the laws of Edward the Confessor, were changed into a steady regard for the Great Charter*. Henceforward we shall view them acting a new part, and possessed of a certain standard to which they might appeal. I hope we shall have great pleasure in pursuing these inquiries together, but we will defer them for the present. In the mean time, you may make yourselves more thoroughly acquainted with the stories which you have lately read to me. You can now understand them without my explanations; and while you are thus engaged, I will consider what circumstances in the next period of English history, are most likely to interest you.

HARRY.

You are very kind, mamma, to give up so much time to our entertainment.

MRS. B.

I hope, my dear boy, that it will answer a better purpose than the transient amusement of a vacant hour. If, at this early period, you acquire a taste for that knowledge which will enable you to set a just value on the laws and constitution of your country, it must have a

* Hallam, p. 130.

favourable influence on your future character. And should you live to be a man, I trust, my dearest Harry, that you will prove yourself, what every Englishman ought to be, the zealous and enlightened friend of order, liberty, and virtue!

THE END.

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